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Indianapolis Colts QB Peyton Manning

Volume 2, No. 261 © SS 2004 MIDEAST EDITION

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2004

Tsunamis' deadly toll assessed across Asia

Fatalities exceed 22,000 in nine countries Pages 11, 14-15



Right: Relatives of people who were killed in the tsunami mourn Monday at a hospital in Nagappattinam, in southern India. Above left: Sri Lankan armed forces personnel guard an area destroyed by the tsunami from looters in downtown Galle, southern Sri Lanka, on Monday. Above right: A man talks on his phone Monday near smashed cars along Patong Beach, in Phuket, Thailand. Rescue teams converged Monday on beaches and remote islands in search of the missing.

AP photos



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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

Nation

Methodist defrocking: A Methodist minister who was defrocked for declaring that she's a lesbian living with her partner is taking her case to a church appeals court.

The Rev. Irene Elizabeth Stroud, of Philadelphia, was ousted Dec. 2 for violating the United Methodist Church's law against "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" in the clergy.

She decided last week to appeal but delayed the announcement until after Christmas weekend. Notice of appeal must be filed this week.

She said one factor in her decision was something retired Bishop Joseph Yeakey, the judge who presided at her church trial, said to her after the verdict. Yeakey told Stroud, "The day will come when the church apologizes for this decision."

World

China and Taiwan: China lashed out at Japan on Monday for allowing former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui to visit the country despite threats from Beijing that it could damage ties between the Asian rivals. China sees Lee, who arrived in central Japan's Nagoya city Monday for a weeklong visit, as a symbol of Taiwan's independence movement.

Lee, 81, made no remarks on his arrival, but gave to a cheering crowd of more than 200 Taiwanese living here. He plans to visit a hot springs resort and the ancient capital of Kyoto, where he attended university in 1943 when Taiwan was a Japanese colony.

China swiftly issued a statement expressing "strong dissatisfaction."

Taiwan and China split amid civil war in 1949, but Beijing considers the self-ruled island to be part of its territory and opposes contact from the self-ruled island's leaders and other countries.

Pinochet indictment: Chile's Supreme Court has postponed until New Year's Eve on whether to uphold the indictment and house arrest of Gen. Augusto Pinochet on human rights charges, a judge reported Monday.

Justice Enrique Cury said a ruling will be announced next week, but he did not give a date.

No reasons were given for the postponement, but two justices of the five-member panel are on vacation for the last week of the year.

Pinochet, 89, remained at his suburban Santiago, Chile, mansion Monday after recovering from a stroke he suffered Dec. 18, and that forced his hospitalization for five months. No reports on his condition have been made public by his doctors or the family since he was discharged from hospital Dec. 22. Prosecution lawyers insisted that while Pinochet has health problems, he is mentally fit to face trial.

Suspected Moroccan terrorists: A Madrid judge has charged three Moroccans with belonging to a radical cell that was planned to buy explosives for a terrorist attack in Spain or Morocco, a court official said Monday.

Investigating magistrate Fernando Andreu charged Majid Bakkali, Mohamed Douha and Mustafa Farhaoui with being members of a terrorist group and conspiring to buy explosives. Bakkali and Douha



Middle East peace: Palestinian men wave as they and others are greeted by friends and relatives Monday after being released by Israeli authorities at the Tarkumiyeh checkpoint near the West Bank town of Hebron. Israel released 159 Palestinian prisoners Monday, most of them with only months or weeks left of their sentences, in what Israel called a "gesture to the new Palestinian leadership." Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said he would seek final Cabinet approval to his Gaza Strip withdrawal plan by February, months ahead of schedule, officials said. Lawmakers also quoted Sharon as saying Israel will use harsh force if Palestinian militants try to disrupt the pullout.

were arrested in northeastern Spain on Dec. 22. Farhaoui was picked up three days later.

The charges are provisional and stop short of a formal indictment, but suggest the court has strong evidence against them. Another Moroccan, who was detained with the pair, was freed. The Interior Ministry said police began watching the group in September when they made contact with a suspected intermediary in an unspecified central European country to buy explosives.

Munch theft: Police questioned a suspect for the first time in the bold robbery of two Edward Munch masterpieces, but declined to say Thursday how close they might be to finding the missing paintings.

"The Scream" and "Madonna" were stolen in a brazen daylight raid from an Oslo museum on Aug. 22 by three masked robbers. There has been no sign of the paintings, although Norwegian media have reported that one painting, "Madonna," may have been seriously damaged.

Oslo Assistant Police Chief Iver Stensrud confirmed that a man was brought in for questioning Wednesday in connection with the theft. The man, whose name was withheld, was released but was still considered to be a suspect, Stensrud said. The suspect's lawyer, Sverre Naess, said his client has an alibi for the time of the theft.

Naess said police had questioned his client about a car used in the robbery and later found abandoned.

Philippines' Estrada: Former Philippine President Joseph Estrada arrived in Hong Kong on Monday for knee surgery, and he promised that he would return to his country to face corruption charges.

Estrada looked relaxed in a denim jacket, jeans and sunglasses as he made his first visit overseas since being ousted amid massive anti-corruption protests in 2001. He has been under virtual house arrest at his holiday home east of Manila.

The 67-year-old former film star told reporters at Hong Kong's airport that he wouldn't try to abscond. An anti-graft court allowed Estrada to leave for the surgery after he posted a \$17,800 bond, and formally pledged to return.

Estrada denied making any deal with the government to get permission to go to Hong Kong.

Imperial succession in Japan: Japan will set up a task force to consider allowing a reigning empress, an official said Monday — the government's first review of a post-World War II law that limits imperial succession to men.

Japanese law bans women from ascending to the Chrysanthemum Throne. But no boy has been born to the Japanese royal family since the 1960s, and government officials have been fretting about how to solve the royals' most serious succession crisis in centuries.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda said a 10-member task force comprised of former government officials, legal experts and scholars would begin meeting in January to examine legal revisions. They will compile a recommendation for the government by late 2005.

Opinion polls have shown that more than 80 percent of Japanese would welcome a reigning empress.

Public concerns for Naruhito's wife, Masako, have pressured the government to consider amending the succession law.

Taliban attack in Afghanistan: Suspected Taliban forces set off explosions as American military convoys rumbled down two roads in southern and eastern Afghanistan, injuring one Marine and damaging a vehicle, officials said Monday.

The first attack occurred Friday in eastern Kunar province, said Maj. Mark McCann, an army spokesman. Some 40 rebels set off a roadside bomb, then opened fire on the convoy, injuring the Marine.

His name was not disclosed, but McCann said his injuries were not life-threatening.

Fighting between Taliban rebels and Afghan forces left at least four people dead last week, while 17 rebels were captured.

The Taliban was unable to carry through on its threat to disrupt October elections or the inauguration earlier this month of Hamid Karzai as Afghanistan's first democratically elected president, leading to speculation that the group is in decline.

Stories and photo from The Associated Press

Assassination attempt kills 15 in Baghdad

Sunni Muslim party pulls out of Iraq election

BY SLOBODAN LEKIC
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — In a double blow to plans for a Jan. 30 parliamentary election, a suicide car bomb aimed at the head of Iraq's strongest Shiite party killed 15 people Monday, and the largest Sunni Muslim political grouping announced its withdrawal from the campaign for the Jan. 30 elections, citing the rapidly deteriorating security situation.

The suicide bomber tried to drive his car into the gate of the residence of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq — the country's most powerful Shiite political party. He detonated his explosives when guards blocked his way.

Fifteen people died and at least 50 were wounded in the explosion, which shook the Jadiriya district and sent a cloud of smoke high above the area, police Capt. Ahmed Ismail said.

Thirty-two cars on the street were destroyed or damaged. Al-Hakim was not hurt.

Hakim also heads the candidate list of the 228-member United Iraqi Alliance coalition, which is widely expected to dominate the post-election constitutional assembly and play a key role in formulating Iraq's new national charter. The coalition is backed by Iraq's top Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

Just hours later, the leader of the moderate Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party announced that the group had reversed its earlier decision to take part in the elections.

"The security situation keeps going from bad to worse and has to be dealt with," said Mohsen Abdel-Hamid.

The two events underline the difficulty of holding credible national elections — the first free ballot since the overthrow of the monarchy 46 years ago — amid the instability caused by the escalating armed insurrection.

The prospect of attacks and intimidation had led senior Sunni political and religious leaders to call for a postponement of the vote until the insurgency is brought under control.



A guard stands amid rubble in front of the residence of Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the country's most powerful Shiite political group. A suicide bomber detonated his car at the residence's gate, killing 15 people and injuring dozens, police said. Al-Hakim was unharmed.

The Iraqi Islamic Party said its decision to pull out of the race does not mean that it would not take part in a future ballot.

"The party's desire is to take part in the future, should the requirements for its success be available," it said.

Party Secretary General Areekh al-Hashemi acknowledged that the withdrawal will leave minority Sunnis underrepresented in the assembly, but noted: "We believe when a house is on fire, you should first put out the fire before working on decorating and arranging it."

Shiites comprise about 60 percent of Iraq's population, with Kurds and Sunni Arabs making up 20 percent each. Many in Iraq and abroad fear the legitimacy of the election would be compromised if the Sunni community refrains from voting.

Shiite leaders also have been sharply critical of the U.S.-led response to the insurgency, saying the Iraqis themselves would have been more effective in countering the mainly Sunni rebels.

Political and religious leaders of the Shiite community, who strongly back the holding of next month's vote, have been repeatedly targeted by the mainly Sunni Muslim insurgents since the ouster of Saddam Hussein.

Monday's suicide attack was the second on a leader of the party on the same block in the Jadiriya district of Baghdad. On Nov. 7, a car bomb exploded near the home of Iraq's finance minister, Adil Abdel-Mahdi. One of his guards died but the minister escaped unharmed.

Speaking after Monday's blast, al-Hakim denounced the interim government's security apparatus, claiming it had been infiltrated by Saddam loyalists.

"We hold the Iraqi government responsible for such criminal acts. This government has adopted the same wrong policies that were adopted by the occupation forces

in dealing with security," al-Hakim told Iraq's Al-Furat Television.

The residence, where Hakim has his home and office, was previously the house of Tariq Aziz, the former senior aide to Saddam who has been in prison since April last year.

In August 2003, a suicide bomber killed Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, elder brother of Abdul Aziz and former leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Like his late brother, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim is a Shiite cleric who opposed Saddam from exile in Iran before returning to Iraq.

Meanwhile, a U.S. soldier died of wounds Monday and another was injured in a roadside bomb explosion in Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad, the U.S. military said in a statement.

And in northern Iraq, gunmen shot dead an Iraqi working as translator for the U.S. military, police Brig. Gen. Sarah Qader said. The shooting of Ali Ahmed took place in the town of Tuz, some 105 miles north of Baghdad.

“The security situation keeps going from bad to worse and has to be dealt with.”

Mohsen Abdel-Hamid
leader, Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party

Bin Laden endorses al-Zarqawi as his deputy

The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — In an audiotape broadcast Monday by al-Jazeera satellite television, a man purported to be Osama bin Laden endorsed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as his deputy in Iraq and called for a boycott of next month's elections there.

The voice on the tape described al-Zarqawi as the "emir" of al-Qaida in Iraq and called upon Muslims there "to listen to him."

Speaking of a statement last month in which al-Zarqawi declared allegiance to bin Laden and changed his group's name to al-Qaida in Iraq, the voice on the tape called it "a great step on the path of uniting all the Muslims in establishing the state of righteousness and ending the state of injustice."

The voice sounded like bin Laden but there was no way to independently confirm who the speaker was.

Al-Jazeera broadcast excerpts of the tape while showing a still photo of the bearded bin Laden, wearing a white robe and head covering.

Al-Zarqawi's group is responsible for numerous car bombings and beheadings of foreign hostages in Iraq.

This was the second tape by bin Laden to surface this month. An audiotape posted on an Islamic Web site Dec. 16 had a man identified as Osama bin Laden praising militants who attacked a U.S. consulate in Saudi Arabia earlier this month and calling on militants to stop the flow of oil to the West.

Bin Laden is believed to be hiding in the mountains along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Sunday, Dec. 26, 2004, at least 1,323 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,034 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is seven higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Thursday.

The British military has reported 75 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 16; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,185 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 925 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ No new deaths reported.

The latest identifications reported by the Defense Department:

■ No new identifications reported.

Troops call for cooperation in strategic Taji

U.S. asks for local help after sheiks say security in area could make other cities safer

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO
Stars and Stripes

TAJI, Iraq — Local leaders in this mostly rural area on the outskirts of Baghdad are telling U.S. military commanders that security is still the most important issue to be resolved.

Military officials largely agree, and say the fastest fix is to get more cooperation from those same leaders and townspeople in ongoing efforts to root out insurgent fighters.

Last week, several battalion commanders and civil affairs personnel from the 256th Brigade Combat Team who patrol the Taji region sat down with local Iraqi officials at a *khada*, or regional council meeting. Working through the morning, the two groups exchanged thanks, sought information and worked to find common ground.

"If you point out to me who the bad guys are, I will capture or kill them," Lt. Col. Geoffrey Slack, commander of the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, told the council members. "We want your input to improve the security picture."

U.S. officials say the Taji area could be particularly important because it lies between Baghdad, Fallujah and Mosul, cities that have become centers of the months-long insurgency. Military leaders say insurgents pushed out in last month's offensive in Fallujah could be training or seeking refuge in the area.

"At the *khada*, local officials echoed these sentiments.

"If you secure this area, you can make Baghdad more and more safe," one of the council members said through an interpreter. Insurgents have already threatened many on the council, he said.

One of the difficulties, the Iraqi leaders said, is that new U.S. units continually rotate through the local area, bringing different



Lt. Col. Geoffrey Slack, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment commander, talks with two local sheiks during a regional council meeting in Taji, Iraq. Local leaders say security is still the most important issue to be resolved.



PHOTOS BY JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Above: Staff Sgt. Feliberto Rivera, left, and Sgt. Javish Rosa, both of the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, clear buildings in a farm compound near Taji on Christmas Eve. Right: Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment ask local residents about a trench found in a palm grove. Soldiers say the trench could have been either a fighting position or a hiding place for a weapons cache.

methods and troops than previous units. One council member said he has met with five different U.S. commanders since June 2003.

Some soldiers have the same complaint, saying they are some-

times only in one area long enough to get to know the local population, then are moved.

"The vast majority of people here are on the edge," Slack, a direct and plain-spoken Long Islander, said in an interview earlier



in his command post. "They aren't sure yet whether working with the coalition is a good thing or bad thing."

Insurgents have warned the local population against cooperating with the U.S. military and

have attacked troops with roadside bombs on several routes throughout the area. In addition, Slack said, criminals have harassed truck drivers and other merchants.

Meeting with local political leaders and sheiks is one of the tactics to find the fighters, who council members claimed were largely foreigners. Another tactic is patrolling the countryside.

On Christmas Eve, a day after the council meeting, the unit sent out several patrols. One, a convoy of armored vehicles riding along one of the many irrigation canals around Taji, stopped in a palm grove near a farm complex.

The soldiers quickly searched the buildings. Then they asked the residents — nearly two dozen women and children and one teenage boy — about the situation. The people in the compound said they had enough gas to run their generator only 30 minutes a day.

Sgt. Javish Rosa, 25, of New York City, said the compound reminded him of Afghanistan, where he served an active-duty tour with the 10th Mountain Division. Rosa surveyed the scene, quietly slipping pieces of candy to the children.

The family offered the soldiers tea, and the troops returned with a box full of presents — stuffed animals, plastic flutes, crayons and other gifts. The encounter ended with smiles all around.

Out in the palm grove, soldiers discovered freshly dug trenches that could be either fighting positions or used to hide recently unearthed weapons caches. Insurgents have been known to bury munitions in outlying areas before digging them up to use in later attacks on U.S. troops, military officials have said.

But Friday, as is often the case, all of the people living nearby said they didn't know how the trenches were used or who dug them.

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Goodwill visit brings treatment, toys



LYNNE STEELY/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Maj. Andrew T. Johnson, civil affairs officer with the 18th Military Police Brigade out of Mannheim, Germany, visits with Iraqi children during a joint civil-military medical operation this month at the Shatt al Arab School in Baghdad. Several brigade soldiers handed out school supplies, first-aid kits, hygiene supplies and toys to the students. The children also were given physical examinations and treated for minor ailments.

Syria challenges U.S. to prove alleged terrorism link in Iraq

The Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Syria on Monday demanded that the United States produce any evidence that Syria is meddling in Iraq's internal affairs and assisting the insurgency against U.S.-led coalition troops in the country.

The state-owned Tishrin daily said Syria has repeatedly called on U.S. envoys and Iraqi officials to put forth evidence to prove their accusations and said Syria was "still waiting" for proof.

"The U.S. accusations are nil, void and baseless," Tishrin said in the front-page editorial.

Iraqi and U.S. officials, including President Bush, have accused Syria of meddling in Iraq's affairs and aiding the insurgency.

Information Minister Mahdi Dakhilallah said

such accusations were meaningless and were harmful "to the general situation and Syrian-Iraqi relations" in particular.

"The situation is difficult in Iraq. [The American] occupation faces a big problem there and the easiest thing is always to try and export the problem, to try and blame others," he said in an interview with Al-Arabiya satellite station Sunday.

Earlier this month, Iraq's Defense Minister Hazem Shaalan accused Syria and Iran of supporting an al-Qaida-linked group in Iraq and insurgents linked to Saddam Hussein's former security forces. Later, Iraq Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi said Shaalan's comments did not reflect his government's policy.

Syria denies the charges and says it is doing all it can to control its long and porous border.

“The U.S. accusations are nil, void and baseless.”

Syria's state-owned Tishrin daily

Ever vigilant in Camp Liberty's watchtowers

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO

Stars and Stripes

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq — Down on the street, a pair of Iraqi men linger by the side of the road. One holds a shovel.

Nearby, another man fuses with a heat-up, stalled car, pushing it close to the side of the road and putting up the hood.

Up in the watchtower, Spc. John Basco and Pfc. Ronald Boudreaux note the behavior and radio it to their command post. Any other place, the activity would seem normal. But on the heavily traveled road next to the perimeter of a large U.S. base near Baghdad, everything is suspect.

The man with the shovel could be burying a roadside bomb.

The stalled car could hold a bomb, waiting for a passing U.S. convoy.

Eight hours a day, Basco and Boudreaux, of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 141st Field Artillery, man one of more than a dozen reinforced watchtowers along the perimeter wall. Other members of their battery, like many artillerymen in Iraq who have been shifted to other duties, man the other towers.

Basco and Boudreaux's unit is known as the Washington Artillery, founded in New Orleans and now the oldest artillery battalion outside the 13 original colonies. Today, it's part of the National Guard's 256th Brigade Combat Team, serving a one-year tour in central Iraq. Other artillerymen from the unit work in the brigade's detention facility and at bag gates.

"It's not like being outside the wire every day, but to me it's almost worse," said Basco, a 23-year-old reservist from New Orleans of the watchtower duty. "We don't see the danger coming. We're stationary, eight hours a day."

A typical shift on the tower is



Above: Spc. John Basco, left, and Pfc. Ronald Boudreaux, of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 141st Field Artillery Regiment, man a watchtower as the sun sets behind Camp Liberty, outside of Baghdad. Right: Pfc. Ronald Boudreaux, of Battery B, 1st Battalion, 141st Field Artillery Regiment, heads up to his post in a watchtower at Camp Liberty.

PHOTOS BY JOSEPH GIORDONO/Stars and Stripes

enough to keep the boredom away. The tower overlooks an agricultural college and is adjacent to an Iraqi police station; both military and civilian vehicles use the road between the two.

One of the first crews to man the tower, Boudreaux said, was attacked by insurgents with a rocket-propelled grenade; one soldier lost an arm in the fight. A few weeks back, says the 20-year-old from Gramercy, La., a backpack bomb was detonated at the police station, sending body parts flying into the street.

They've seen roadside bombs detonate and have watched a fierce firefight about 900 yards

"It's not like being outside the wire every day, but to me, it's almost worse. We don't see the danger coming. We're stationary, eight hours a day."

Spc. John Basco

Battery B, 1st Battalion, 141st Field Artillery

down the road. At night, they often hear mortar rounds hitting nearby.

"You didn't see it, but you heard it," Basco says of one. "This tower was shook, let's put it that way."

Sometimes, children come close to the wall. One little girl threw a rose onto the top of the wall, which Basco saved and sent home to his wife. Another time, a group of kids tossed one of their

photo albums up to the tower.

Inside, picture after picture showed the Iraqi family with a group of soldiers. It's obviously from a less dangerous time — the soldiers are without weapons, helmets and body armor, eating meals with the family in their home. In one series of pictures, which Basco filmed with his own small video camera while paging through the album, the family presents a soldier with birthday cakes, candles and all. It's a heartbreaking reminder for the soldiers in the tower that things weren't always the way they are now.

On the street, a dozen men pile

into a taxi van. A group of boys start teasing one another, which escalates into a shoving match.

"Oh, they threw his hat on the ground. It's on now," laughs Boudreaux.

"They're fixing to scrap."

Later, a convoy of armored vehicles rumbles by; the man with the stalled vehicle is still there. Nothing happens.

At sunset, the call to prayer echoes from a nearby mosque. Soon, it's almost completely dark. The street lights on one side of the road don't work; the traffic slows to a crawl, pedestrians head for home.

Basco and Boudreaux have five hours left on their shift, then another team relieves them. For them, the talk turns to football and the New Orleans Saints.

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Army chief says Iraq war 'going pretty well'

BY JOSH WHITE

The Washington Post

TIKRIT, Iraq — Gen. Peter Schoomaker, the Army's chief of staff, made a surprise visit to a small group of soldiers here at Forward Operating Base Danger, and said in an interview that the war in Iraq is "going pretty well."

"Everybody I talk to has a balanced view and understands a challenge is ahead of us," Schoomaker said. "It's an important time. It's tough, it's a battle of wills, and we're going to stick with it."

In an unannounced visit, Schoomaker arrived at this northern Iraq city late Sunday and shared dinner with a group of about two dozen Army soldiers who have recently decided to re-enlist. Schoomaker arrived at the base's mess hall after 7 p.m. to a band softly playing Christmas songs and soldiers eagerly awaiting a seat next to him.

"I don't know of a time when an army could do its job as well as this one is doing," Schoomaker said after a quick meal with a gaggle of soldiers, officers, and



Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker,

left, awards the Purple Heart medal to

Sgt. Douglas McManama of

Sandston, Va.,

at Forward Operating Base

Marez in Mosul, Iraq, on Sunday.

McManama was injured during the suicide bomber attack in the dining facility last Tuesday.

AP

Maj. Gen. John R.S. Battiste, who commands the 1st Infantry Division. "I'm very proud of you."

Schoomaker's visit was the third on the

part of top Pentagon officials in recent days. Soldiers in Tikrit also met with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld during his whirlwind Christmas Eve tour of Iraq

on Friday, and Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ushered a USO troupe through Iraq earlier this month.

Schoomaker, wearing the Army's newly designed all-purpose camouflage uniform, presented each of the soldiers he met with a commemorative command coin in the shape of a dog tag.

He said the dog tag symbolizes "what armies are for; armies are there to fight."

"You've made an important commitment," Schoomaker told the soldiers as they stood around a dining table in a corner of the mess hall. "The thing that gives me the most optimism for our country is you. I know some of you are going to be members of Congress, leaders of industry, leaders of the Army. You're just extraordinary."

Schoomaker spent his holiday weekend visiting troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, personally re-enlisting soldiers in both countries and awarding some soldiers their purple heart awards for combat injuries.

Earlier in the day, he visited soldiers with the 1st Cavalry Division in the Baghdad area.

Mosul attack lessens trust in Iraqi troops

BY LOUISE ROUG

Los Angeles Times

FORWARD OPERATING BASE CALDWELL, Iraq — Army 1st Lt. Lawrence Judkins had just sat down to eat with a couple of fellow soldiers at this base in Kirkush when he noticed six Iraqi workers entering.

As the men sat down at the next table, he and his friends got up and left.

It took only a few glances between the U.S. soldiers to communicate what played on their minds: Mosul.

"I didn't recognize them," Judkins said later.

Last week, a suicide bomber killed 22 people, including 18 Americans and three Iraqi guardsmen, in a mess tent at Forward Operating Base Marez near Mosul. The United States has been investigating how the attacker penetrated the base's security, and military officials said they suspected that the attacker was wearing a uniform of the Iraqi security forces, who share facilities with U.S. troops.

"If it turns out that it's a suicide bomber dressed in Iraqi National Guard uniforms, it would have no effect on the relationship with the Iraqi National Guards that we work with here," said Maj. Gen. John Batista, commander of the 1st Infantry Division, when he visited the Caldwell base Sat-

urday. "We fully understand that those uniforms are available. That's a potential risk that we take."

Although military commanders said the bombing would not change relations between Americans and Iraqis, it has increased tensions and distrust. Soldiers said they were taking an extra look at security forces, as well as translators and contractors.

"Everybody is watching everybody," said Spc. Clay Wright, from Knoxville, Tenn., with the 278th Regiment.

Along a chain-link fence in a corner of the Caldwell post, 50 miles northeast of Baghdad, U.S. soldiers live in rows of tents side by side with Iraqi interpreters. In another part of the base, Marines train Iraqi security forces. At night, Iraqis clean the bathrooms by the soldiers' housing.

Iraqi security forces man entry checkpoints.

One soldier mentioned what appeared to be a new security measure.

For a ceremony where high-ranking U.S. officers and Iraqi security forces were

present, soldiers were told to wear body armor. At previous ceremonies, such as memorials or graduations, that had not been the case.

"Mosul... forces us to change our tempo, change the way we do business," said Lt. Col. Gerald Waddie, who is in charge of troop security at Caldwell and oversees the training of the Iraqi national guard there. He didn't want to specify what changes, if any, had taken place.

On this base, Americans and Iraqis play soccer together, exchange joke e-mails and share endless cigarettes, but their relationship is complicated.

"We trust them," one Iraqi interpreter said. "But we don't know if they trust us."

After the attack near Mosul, many U.S. soldiers said that while they might know and like the Iraqis they dealt with daily, they were wary.

"You can't get into that mind-set that it can't happen here — because it can," said Tim Norrod, a soldier with the 278th Regiment.

Another soldier put it this way: "It's like

Attila the Hun," poisoned by his wife on their wedding night, he said. "You always have to be on guard."

U.S. officials prefer working with Kurdish security forces "because they trust them more. Americans don't even like to use Iraqis in the kitchens, because they worry they might poison the food," according to Sabah Kadhim, spokesman for Iraq's Interior Ministry.

Working with Iraqi soldiers in the past, U.S. commanders have said they worried that the Iraqis might turn their guns on American soldiers on the battlefield. When joint operations are planned, U.S. soldiers frequently don't inform their Iraqi counterparts about the details or the target until a couple of hours before because they worry about leaks from the Iraqi side.

While the United States continues military operations and trains Iraqi security forces in preparation for the eventual handover of power, part of the U.S. strategy is economic. Creating jobs for local Iraqis and pumping money into the local economy help fight the insurgency, commanders said.

The attacks near Mosul cast a shadow for incoming soldiers, who had yet to make any Iraqi friends on the base.

Judkins said: "They're still a little jumpy."

Edmund Sanders of the Los Angeles Times contributed to this report.

“Americans don't even like to use Iraqis in the kitchens, because they worry they might poison the food.”

Sabah Kadhim

Spokesman, Iraq's Interior Ministry



LARRY REILLY/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Friends and family catch their first glimpse of returning 1st Infantry Division's Division Support Command and 701st Main Support Battalion soldiers this month in the reception tent on Harvey Barracks last week in Kitzingen, Germany. The BSB spent \$1.8 million to lease nine "reintegration tents" for division homecoming events from Iraq this spring.

Kitzingen buys tents to host flood of 1st ID homecomings

BY STEVE LIEWER

Stars and Stripes

KITZINGEN, Germany — The 417th Base Support Battalion has spent nearly \$2 million on a welcome-home present for the soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division's headquarters and support staff based in Würzburg and nearby Kitzingen.

It has leased nine aluminum-sided portable buildings for use as reception and reintegration centers at Leighton, Harvey and Larson barracks in the two communities.

Capt. Larry Wright Jr., the BSB's plans and operations officer, said the heated buildings will fill in for gyms, hangars and meeting rooms during the division's busy

homecoming from Iraq, which is expected to peak in February.

That will free up those rooms for use by the rest of the community, Wright said.

Thousands of family members will greet returning soldiers for the first time in the three reception centers, one of which has been built at each base. Wright said each contains 500-seat bleachers, office space, a children's play area and a movie room.

The large buildings are divided by curtains, so spouses and children can wait on one side while troops fill out paperwork and turn in weapons on the other. Then the returning soldiers line up, and the curtains are pulled back to dramatically reveal them standing at attention, Wright said.

The six reintegration buildings are being erected in a motor pool on Leighton Barracks and should be completed by this week.

Soldiers will attend seven half-days of mandatory reintegration training in the new tents before heading off on 30 days of block leave, Wright said.

"In January and February, when we have the big rush, we'll have different units in every tent," he said.

Wright said 417th BSB leaders decided to rent the tents after observing the 1st Armored Division's homecoming at Baumholder from Iraq last summer.

"They were using gyms and other facilities," of different sizes and shapes, he said.

"It was just felt that it was better to have standardized facilities."

The support battalion spent \$1.8 million from a special fund dedicated for expenses related to the war on terrorism to rent the tents until late spring, Wright said. If the tents work well they may be purchased for permanent use.

The tents got their first test Dec. 18 when the first 53 soldiers from the Division Support Command returned to Harvey with the 1st ID's advance party.

"I thought they worked well," said Maj. Christopher Chun, the support command's rear-detachment commander. "Once they get a larger number of soldiers [coming home], that'll be the real test."

E-mail Steve Liewer at: liewers@mail.ustripes.com

IN THE STATES

U.S. intelligence agencies coping with shortages

BY KATHERINE PLEGER SHRAIDER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. counterterrorism agencies are shopping for talent at job fairs, dangling generous scholarships and luring staff from each other in a race to overcome a shortage of analysts that may only get worse with America's new intelligence overhaul.

The problem existed even before Congress and the White House approved an intelligence restructuring this month that creates positions for people whose skills already are in high demand.

There is no consensus across the nation's 15 intelligence agencies on where staffing needs are the most acute. But few dispute that many more analysts are needed, particularly in the departments and agencies created since Sept. 11, 2001. The nearly two-year-old Homeland Security Department is a prime example.

"If you had a hundred, we'd take them," Pat Hughes, the Homeland Security Department's top intelligence official, said in an interview earlier this year. "We have to look, search, test, assess. You don't just get analysts off a tree. ... We need people, but we need good people."

To find them, Homeland Security and other agencies are heading to job fairs, often looking near military bases where civil service is part of the culture and people may have security clearances.

They're also trying to snag people from the private sector.

Congress also is offering sweeteners.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Pat Roberts, a Republican from Kansas, has created military-style scholarships for the intelligence community. Under the program, undergraduate and graduate students can receive up to \$50,000 of tuition if they agree to take needed jobs in an intelligence agency for up to three years.

This year, slots for 150 students were divided among the agencies, using \$4 million. Being an analyst is almost an academic profession — part taught, part absorbed, part intuition — that requires weighing volumes of information and boiling it down into reports for policy-makers in the executive branch and Congress.

Among the most classified and most important reports are national intelligence estimates, which draw on information across government and are written by leading analysts at the National Intelligence Council.



A motorist dodges traffic after parking his truck at right and moving to assist a car that went into a ditch during a snowstorm Sunday on Virginia 10 between Chuckatuck and Smithfield, Va.

Snow, sleet falls along East Coast, causing more delays

BY MARK PRATT
The Associated Press

BOSTON — A storm spread sleet, freezing rain and more than a foot of snow along the Eastern seaboard, knocking out power Monday to thousands in New England, stranding hundreds of motorists along icy highways in the Carolinas and causing airport delays.

At least two traffic deaths were blamed on the weather in North Carolina.

Forty-two inches of snow had fallen Monday in Virginia and 18 inches fell in eastern Massachusetts as the storm skimmed the coast on a northeasterly track. Up to 20 inches of snow was possible in southeastern Massachusetts, the National Weather Service said.

Just over 8 inches fell on the eastern tip of New York's Long Island.

The snow limited Boston's Logan International Airport to a

single runway until a second was opened late in the morning. That caused "substantial" flight delays, said Logan spokesman Phil Orlandella. Rhode Island got up to 10 inches and T.F. Green Airport in Warwick had flight delays Monday after shutting down late Sunday night so crews could clear runways.

Among the travelers affected were the New England Patriots, who arrived in Boston by bus early Monday after a seven-hour ride from New Jersey, where they defeated the New York Jets 23-7.

"We were all loaded on the plane in Newark and ready to leave and there were some long discussions" about deteriorating airport conditions in Boston and Providence, said WBZ sportscaster Gil Santos, the team's radio play-by-play announcer. The players got off their plane and boarded four buses, he said.

The snow was accompanied by

stiff wind, and as many as 22,000 customers lost electrical service. Most of them were back on line by late morning, said NStar spokesman John Milton. Scattered outages were reported elsewhere in eastern New England.

The storm's combination of wind, freezing rain and snow hit parts of the Carolinas on Sunday, snapping tree limbs and power lines.

About 2,100 customers were still without electricity Monday in North Carolina, down from a peak of 14,000. More than 16,000 homes and businesses were blacked out Sunday in South Carolina, but that number was down to less than 5,000 Monday morning.

Traffic resumed moving early Monday on Interstate 95 in eastern North Carolina after Sunday's ice and more than six inches of snow slowed cars and trucks to a crawl and made some motorists give up altogether.

Hundreds of travelers spent the night in hotel lobbies and shelters.

Online casino strikes again, buying naughty children's Christmas gifts

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — An online casino will pay a man \$5,300 for his naughty children's Christmas gifts.

The same casino made headlines buying a cheese sandwich said to bear the Virgin Mary's

image and a plate that supposedly came from the Titanic.

The Pasadena man said last week that he decided to auction the three Nintendo DS game systems because his sons, ages nine, eleven, and 15, had misbehaved.

The man says his family will use the money to buy a new heating

system for his Pasadena church. He spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

GoldenPalace.com has paid about \$108,000 for eBay oddities in just more than a month. Its spokesman says it plans to donate the game systems to a needy Houston family.

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Shoppers go back to the mall for bargains

Consumers, retailers hope post-Christmas sales bring good cheer

BY ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
The Associated Press

Merchants are slashing post-holiday prices even deeper, hoping to squeeze the last bit of sales from a shopping season that many retailers are finding unimpressive.

The nation's malls and stores offered discounts on coats, cashmere sweaters and other items Sunday as Americans en masse returned unwanted and ill-fitting presents and redeemed gift cards.

After struggling with disappointing sales throughout the holiday season, retailers and mall operators like J.C. Penney Co. Inc. and Taubman Centers Inc. reported a pickup in sales this past week, though winter storms in the Midwest stymied shopping in the affected regions. Now, merchants are focusing on the week after Christmas, relying on shoppers to do more buying — and less returning — to meet their modest sales goals.

With gift cards increasingly popular, plenty of stores including Penney and Target were encouraging consumers in advertising on Sunday to spend them immediately — gift cards are recorded only when they are redeemed.

"The holiday season will be told on how many gift cards get re-



Shoppers — like these crossing Geary Boulevard in San Francisco — headed to the nation's malls and stores Sunday to grab post-holiday bargains as merchants slashed prices even deeper in hopes of squeezing more sales out of what's winding up to be an unimpressive holiday season.

deemed in the week after Christmas," versus how many will be redeemed in January and February, said Ellen Tolley, a spokeswoman for the National Retail Federation, which estimated \$17.24 billion worth — or roughly

about 8 percent of holiday sales — will be sold in gift cards this season.

The industry association is sticking with its forecast of a 4.5 percent gain in total sales for November and December. That ex-

cludes restaurant and auto sales.

Other bright spots this season have been online shopping, with sales at the high end of projections, and luxury stores, which have continued with robust sales. About 400 people endured the

cold and snowy roads to shop at Kaufmann's at Polaris Fashion Place in Columbus, Ohio.

The early bargain-hunters were treated to 50 to 60 percent off everything from coats to shoes to gold jewelry. Many also came in the door with newspaper coupons offering \$10 off if they spent more than \$25.

Among the crowds were Tomi and Ira Campbell of Columbus, who arrived at Kaufmann's at about 6:30 a.m., with their 3-year-old son and an ad with a circled listing for cashmere sweaters discounted to \$29.99.

"You can't beat that. I've watched the cashmere sweaters for months," Tomi Campbell said. "I got two cashmires for less than the price of one."

Even luxury stores like Saks Fifth Avenue and Bergdorf Goodman, which have held back on price cutting amid strong sales, offered generous discounts of up to 70 percent. C. Britt Bloemer, chairman of America's Research Group, believes those cuts were unplanned and were an attempt to recoup what he believes was lost business last week.

The full picture for the holiday shopping season won't be known until Jan. 6, when the nation's retailers are slated to report their December sales figures.

Church closures go on as planned

Mass. parishioners' vigil ends peacefully

BY KEN MAGUIRE
The Associated Press

NATICK, Massachusetts — A protest vigil at a parish slated for closure by the Boston archdiocese ended when police sealed off the 14-year-old church following its final Mass and ordered parishioners to leave.

About a dozen parishioners had resumed the vigil at Sacred Heart Church on Sunday morning after two church members, Anne Green and Leo Ryan, were arrested for refusing to leave following Christmas Eve Mass on Friday night.

But after several hours, police entered the building and told the parishioners they would be arrested if they didn't leave. No arrests were made.

The closure is part of a reorganization plan announced last



Brendan Melchiorri, 14, left, prays with his father, Rocky, center, on the steps of Sacred Heart Church in Natick, Mass. A vigil at the church ended Sunday without arrests after police sealed off the church and ordered out parishioners who had refused to leave after the final Mass.

spring by Archbishop Sean O'Malley. The move was in response to declining attendance, a shortage of priests and financial pressure caused in part by the clergy sex abuse crisis. The archdiocese is shutting down or consolidating 83 churches by year's end.

Brendan Melchiorri, 14, who left Sacred Heart weeping with the other evicted parishioners, said the closure was "one of the worst days of my entire life."

"I was baptized in this church, and I've grown up in this

church," he said. "It's wrong. It's horrible. This shouldn't be happening. I can't believe I'm never going to see the inside of my church ever again."

Kelly Lynch, a spokeswoman for the archdiocese, said there was no decision to take a harder line against the protests.

"The decisions made at Sacred Heart were based on circumstances particular to this parish," she said.

Parishioners at eight other churches continued around-the-clock vigils to stave off their closures.

Mission of plane is an open secret

CIA uses Gulfstream jet to transport detainees

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The airplane is a Gulfstream V turboprop, the sort favored by CEOs and celebrities. But since 2001, it has been seen at military airports from Pakistan to Indonesia to Jordan, sometimes being boarded by hooded and handcuffed passengers.

The plane's owner of record, Premier Executive Transport Services Inc., lists directors and officers who appear to exist only on paper.

And each one of those directors and officers has a recently issued Social Security number and an address only of a post office box, according to an extensive search of state, federal and commercial records.

Bryan P. Dyess, Steven E. Kent, Timothy R. Sperling and Audrey M. Tailor are names without residential, work, telephone or corporate histories — just the kind of "sterile identities," said current and former intelligence officials, that the CIA uses to conceal involvement in clandestine operations. In this case, the agency is flying captured terrorist suspects from one country to another for detention and interrogation.

The CIA calls this "rendition." Premier Executive's Gulfstream helps make it possible. According to civilian aircraft landing permits, the jet has permission to use U.S. military airfields worldwide.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, secret renditions have become a principal weapon in the CIA's arsenal against suspected al-Qaida terrorists, according to congressional testimony by CIA officials. But as the practice has grown, the agency has had more difficulty keeping it secret.

According to airport officials, public documents and hobbyist plane spotters, the Gulfstream V has been used to transport detainees into or out of Jakarta, Indonesia; Pakistan; Egypt; and Sweden, usually at night, and has landed at well-known U.S. government refueling stops.

Human rights groups are working on legal challenges to renditions, said Morton Sklar, executive director of the World Organization for Human Rights USA, because one of the purposes is to transport detainees to countries that use harsh interrogation methods outlawed in the United States. That, he said, is prohibited by the U.N. Convention on Torture.

U.S. pledges more aid to Laos for UXO removal

BY FREDERIC J. FROMMER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Three decades after the end of the Vietnam War, the United States is increasing aid to help remove unexploded ordnance and continues to kill people in the former war zone — especially in Laos, where 2 million tons of bombs were dropped.

During the war, the United States bombed Laos relentlessly for a decade in an effort to cut off North Vietnamese supply lines. Though the war ended 30 years ago, the carnage from those bombings continues.

Nearly a third of the bombs failed to explode, lying in wait as "de facto anti-personnel mines," according to a Human Rights Watch report. The bombs have killed roughly 6,000 Laotians since the end of fighting.

"Every time I go to Laos, I meet fresh bomb victims who have lost an arm or a leg or two," said Jim Harris, a retired Wisconsin school principal who helps educate people about the experience of Laotian refugees in his state. U.S. pilots dropped 2 million tons of bombs on Laos from 1964-1973, double the amount dropped on Germany in World War II.

The United States has agreed to nearly double the amount of aid it provides to help remove those bombs, known as unexploded ordnance, or UXO. Congress approved \$2.5 million for bomb re-

UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE IN LAOS

A deadly remainder of war

The presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) is widespread in nine of Laos' 17 provinces, according to a government monitoring group.

Between 1995 and 2001, more than 292,000 pieces of UXO were destroyed and 4,600 acres of land cleared.

SOURCES: Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Program; U.S. Department of State

moval in Laos next year, up from \$1.4 million, as part of a move to normalize trade relations with the impoverished Southeast Asian country.

But the improvement in trade relations and even the increased funding for bomb removal were opposed by some critics who said Laos continues to persecute its Hmong minority that fought alongside the CIA during the Vietnam War.

"Why should the U.S. taxpayer pay to remove land mines and unexploded ordnance from the Viet-

Province with widespread UXO
Pieces removed in 2002 in bold



nam War, when the Lao government and military are involved in military operations against the Hmong people," asked Philip Smith, the Washington director of Lao Veterans of America.

But Rep. Betty McCollum, a Minnesota Democrat, said the United States "has a moral obligation to partner with the people of Laos to help eliminate the ordnance and put the land back into productive use for this impoverished nation."

Many of the Hmong people who fled Laos settled in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

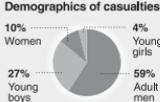
Continuing toll

From 1973 to 1996, unexploded ordnance caused 10,649 deaths and injuries, according to the U.S. Department of State.

Average number of UXO incidents, annually



Demographics of casualties



While the Laotian government is in charge of bomb removal, it relies on help from other countries and outside groups to help pay for it. The Laotian bomb removal agency, UXO Lao, hit a crisis point a couple of years ago.

"Money wasn't coming in in sufficient numbers, and UXO Lao had to let go of half of its employees," said Douglas Hartwick, the U.S. ambassador to Laos from 2001 until last July. "So there was a big push on the part of donors, and the Lao government to put together a long-term coherent strat-

egy to clean up the unexploded bombs."

The agency's annual budget is around \$4 million, according to its Web site. Officials with UXO Lao did not respond to e-mails seeking comment.

Hartwick said the explosives removal process, using metal detectors, is painstakingly slow. "You're getting constant hits with a metal detector," said Hartwick. "You've got strappinel like you would believe, plus bullets, mortars and grenades."

The Mine Advisory Group, a non-governmental organization in Great Britain that helps destroy land mines and unexploded ordnance worldwide, is one of several private groups that receive U.S. money for work in Laos.

Sean Sutton, the group's spokesman, said, "It's welcome news that the United States is doing more to help."

During a visit to Laos in October, he said, seven people were killed when a man hit a bomb while chopping wood. Just a few days later, he said, two boys were killed when playing with tennis-ball-sized cluster bomblets.

He said many of the injuries and fatalities occur when poor Laotians are attracted to the explosives in search of scrap metal. They can get \$1 for seven pounds of steel or about two pounds of aluminum.

"For a typical family making \$20 a year farming, a dollar is worth an awful lot," Sutton said.

FDA OKs study of Ecstasy for anxiety in terminal patients

The Washington Post

For some, the diagnosis comes out of the blue. For others, it arrives after a long battle. Either way, the news that death is just a few months away poses a daunting challenge for both doctor and patient.

Drugs that ease pain and reduce anxiety, but also cause the more profound issues that come with impending death: The wish to resolve lingering conflicts with family members. The longing to know, before it's too late, what it means to love, or what it means to live. There is no medicine to address such disease.

Or is there? This month, in a little-noted administrative decision, the Food and Drug Administration gave the green light to a Harvard proposal to test the benefits of the illegal street drug known as Ecstasy in patients diagnosed with severe anxiety related to advanced cancer.

The drug, also known as 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, or MDMA, has been referred to by psychiatrists as an "empathogen," a drug especially good at putting people in touch with their emotions. Some believe it could help patients come to terms with the end of life.

The FDA's approval marks a milestone for a small but increasingly effective movement favoring a more open-minded attitude toward the therapeutic potential of psychedelic drugs, virtually all of which have been criminalized and disparaged for decades as medically useless.

In the coming year, advocates also hope to submit to the FDA an application to test psilocybin and LSD on treatments for a debilitating syndrome known as cluster headaches.



Elicia Battle poses in a Cleveland gym on Dec. 15. Battle gained fame in 2003 by falsely claiming she lost a winning Mega Millions ticket worth \$162 million. Battle said it's now hard for her to hold down a job.

Lottery liar takes job battle to the ring

BY JOE MILICIA

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Ever since she claimed to lose that winning lottery ticket, Elicia Battle's reputation has been on the ropes. Still struggling with disgrace a year after insisting that Mega Millions jackpot was rightfully hers, Battle says she's had a hard time landing a job.

Now she'll be looking to land jobs — in her new career as a boxer.

Her ring name: "Mega Battle."

The 41-year-old said she's been training for seven months and will be ready to make her debut next month. She still insists that she thought she bought the winning ticket worth \$162 million. The mother of four grabbed national headlines by saying she lost the ticket for the Dec. 30, 2003, drawing when she dropped her purse outside a convenience store in suburban South Euclid.

Police said they had no reason to believe Battle was lying; her description of picking the winning numbers based on family

birthdays and ages seemed plausible. And it was known that the winner picked their own numbers.

But after the real winner, hospital worker Rebecca Jemison, claimed the prize, Battle had some explaining to do.

"She tearfully apologized, saying, 'I wanted to win so bad for my kids and my family.' She was convicted in April of filing a false police report, a misdemeanor, put on one year's probation.

Battle said since then she's struggled to find work.

"It's been complicated getting a job. 'Aren't you that lady...? I can't go anywhere without people knowing who I am,' she said.

She trains with Romeo Conner, who has taught boxers for 20 years. He said he's never talked to her about the Mega Millions fiasco. He said he believes in Battle because of her dedication to training.

"If she was pretending, I would have known by now," Conner said. "I deliberately make stuff extremely hard and she keeps coming back the next day."

Kwanzaa celebrates focus on education

The Record (Bergen County, N.J.)

HACKENSACK, N.J. — For Marlene Ware, a teacher at Tenack High School, Kwanzaa is an opportunity to do something African.

"A lot of African-Americans to this day really don't acknowledge the role that Africa has in the world," Ware said.

As organizer of the high school's annual Kwanzaa celebration, which was held earlier this month, Ware uses the holiday to demonstrate the importance of Africa to people of all races.

Families and educators look to Kwanzaa as a way to educate young people, particularly young African-Americans, about Africa as well as the struggles blacks have faced in the United States.

"It invites family time and family unity and it gives them another sense of who they are," said Keli Drew Lockhart-Ba of Trenton, a psychologist who celebrates the holiday with her family.

Kwanzaa was first observed in 1966. It was created by Kwanzaa Karenga, now the chairman of the Black Studies department at California State University at Long Beach, as a way for African-Americans to celebrate their roots in Africa. It is now observed by millions of people around the world.

IN THE WORLD

Asia quake death toll passes 22,000

BY DILIP GANGULY
The Associated Press

See related stories
on Pages 14-15

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Rescuers piled up bodies Monday along southern Asian coastlines devastated by tidal waves that obliterated seaside towns and killed more than 22,000 people in 10 countries. With thousands missing and the death toll expected to climb far higher, aid agencies and nations rushed to help millions of people left homeless or without clean water.

Hundreds of children were buried in mass graves in India, and morgues and hospitals struggled to cope with the catastrophe.

Somalia reported hundreds of deaths, some 3,000 miles away from the earthquake off Indonesia that sent tsunamis raging across the Indian Ocean.

The International Red Cross reported 23,700 deaths and expressed concern about waterborne diseases like malaria and cholera. Jan Egeland, the U.N. Emergency Relief Coordinator, said millions of people were affected — by lost homes, polluted drinking water, destroyed sanitation — and that the cost of the damage would "probably be many billions of dollars."

Government aid officials suggested the toll could jump even further, citing unconfirmed reports of thousands more deaths on Sumatra and on India's Andaman and Nicobar islands, areas closest to the quake's epicenter.

Waves of water sped away from

the quake's epicenter at more than 500 mph before crashing into the region's shorelines, sweeping people and fishing villages out to sea.

The governments of Indonesia and Thailand conceded that public warnings came too late or not at all. But officials insisted they could not know the seriousness of the threat because no tsunami warning system exists for the Indian Ocean.

Rescuers converged on beaches and islands throughout the region to search for survivors, as troops in the ground struggled to deliver urgently needed aid. Pakistan, India's nuclear-armed rival, offered assistance.

Chaos erupted at the airport in Phuket, Thailand, as hundreds of tourists, many wounded and weeping, tried to board planes.

Sri Lanka said more than 10,000 people were killed along its coastlines, and Tamil rebels said 2,000 people died in its territory, raising that country's toll to more than 12,000. Indonesia reported about 5,000 deaths and India 4,000. Thailand and hundreds of people were dead and thousands more were missing. Deaths also were reported in Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Somalia.

The Red Cross reported 6,000 deaths in India and three deaths in the Seychelles, part of its total of 23,700.



Relatives carry the body of child who was killed by waves at Silver Beach in Cuddalore, India, on Monday. Massive waves triggered by an earthquake slammed into southern India on Sunday, killing thousands.

With communications still difficult with the areas closest to the epicenter, officials predicted more deaths there. Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla said the death toll on the island of Sumatra could climb to 10,000.

The southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu reported thousands of deaths. Chief Minister Jayaram Jayalithala called the scene "an

extraordinary calamity of such colossal proportions that the damage has been unprecedented."

Nearly beaches resembled open-air mortuaries. In Cuddalore, red-eyed parents buried more than 150 children in a mass grave covered over by a bulldozer.

The tsunami came without warning. Witnesses said sea wa-

ters at first retreated far out into the ocean, only to return at a vicious pace.

Aid agencies and governments around the world began pouring relief supplies into the region Monday.

Associated Press reporters Lety T. Diuhari in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, Sutin Wannabovorn and Altaa Tan in Phuket, Thailand, and S. Srivizavan in Cuddalore, India, contributed to this report.

Diego Garcia Navy base spared damage in quake

BY LEO SHANE III
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Navy support facility located near the center of the Indian Ocean was spared any damage from Sunday's devastating ocean surges.

Officials said the Diego Garcia Navy Support Facility, which houses about 1,700 military personnel and 1,500 civilian contrac-

tors, suffered no damage related to Sunday's earthquake and ensuing tsunamis.

Personnel at the facility's billing office contacted by Stars and Stripes on Monday reported no unusual activity or problems over the two weekend days.

Diego Garcia, the southernmost island in the Chagos Archipelago, sits about 1,000 miles south of India and roughly 2,000 miles from the earthquake's epicenter.

But officials in Somalia, whose coast is nearly 3,000 from the earthquake's center, reported more than 100 deaths in coastal areas as a result of tidal waves.

Carolyn Bell, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Geological Survey, said even though an earthquake like Sunday's will radiate destructive waves in all directions, the damage caused by the water differs greatly depending on the undersea topography.

She speculated that the numerous countries that may have disappeared as some of the waves' impact on the British-owned island, resulting in only a slightly higher tide that residents might not necessar-



ly notice. She said residents of coastal areas in Australia reported no effects from the earthquake, even though researchers know the sea levels there rose several feet.

Diego Garcia is a horseshoe-shaped island about 39 miles long, surrounded by coral reefs on all sides. Its highest point is only 22 feet above sea level.

Both Naval and Air Force personnel are stationed on the island.

During the first Gulf War, the facility was used to support and launch numerous strikes against Iraq.

The Navy has eight ships active in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and officials said none reported any damage from Sunday's disaster.

E-mail: Leo Shane III at: shanel@stripes.osd.mil

U.S. sends disaster teams off to nations

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States dispatched disaster teams Monday and prepared a \$15 million aid package to the Asian countries hit by a massive earthquake and tsunamis. U.S. officials were seeking to contact hundreds of Americans who remain unaccounted for in the region.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said eight Americans died and that embassy officials were trying to locate other U.S. citizens who have not been heard from since Sunday's quake.

"We will do everything we can to immediately help," he said. The U.S. Navy said it sent three P-3 surveillance aircraft from Kadena air base on the Japanese island of Okinawa to Utaapho, Thailand, to conduct survey operations, including a possible role in search-and-rescue efforts.

The Navy said it had no reports of damage to any of its ships or bases in the region.

President Bush expressed his condolences over the "terrible loss of life and suffering."

"As of now, we don't detect any large impact on the U.S. military," White House deputy press secretary Trent Duffy said Monday from the president's ranch.

U.S. officials immediately sent \$100,000 each to India, Indonesia, the Maldives and Sri Lanka, and planned to donate \$4 million later Monday to help Red Cross disaster efforts, Powell said.

The initial U.S. aid package being crafted was expected to reach \$15 million, officials said. Powell cautioned that was a "quick infusion" and that the administration was prepared to help with long-term rebuilding.

State Department officials said embassies in the affected countries are still open, and they are working to account for all Americans who may have been vacationing or living near those countries' coastlines. Officials have created a toll-free hot line for U.S. citizens to get more information on relatives who may have been in the affected areas on Sunday. For Americans outside the United States, that number is (317) 472-2528.

Stripes reporter Leo Shane contributed to this story from Washington.

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It's only one of the holidays

The writer of "What holiday is it?" (letter, Dec. 22) is reminded that Christmas is not one traditional day that is celebrated during this international holiday period.

What does the writer do after the stroke of midnight on Dec. 31st? Yell "Merry Christmas" while the other revelers are saying "Happy New Year?"

I believe that the Jewish people have a right to celebrate the holidays without saying "Merry Christmas" to each other. History reveals that it was the pagans who started celebrating their holiday on the 21st of December a long time before the Christians moved their icon's birthday to enhance their religion's appeal.

Most people say "Happy Holidays" because they want to include everyone and not unintentionally offend. It is a virtue to assume that everyone in an audience is Jewish, pagan, Christian or to try to impose your brand of religion on strangers. However, if I know for sure what someone is, I greet them with their traditional greeting.

Also, I do not believe that biologists, doctors and scientists can be classified as lunatics just because modern-day politicians have caved in to far-right religious political pressure in the pursuit of power. I hope such as the writer would learn to be a little more tolerant of others' rights to choose what they want to celebrate, we need to be a lot closer to achieving hope, peace and joy for everyone.

So, why does it matter how you are greeted during this long-standing, pre-Christian end-of-the-year holiday season, as long as you are included in the greeting?

Donald Jagan
 Camp Anacosta, Iraq

Thanks for schedule change

I would like to thank Army leaders at the 1st Infantry Division, Joseph Tafaya, Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe superintendent; and Harvey Gerry, DODDS-Europe chief of staff. As a parent of a child in Würzburg (Germany) Elementary School, I am elated to have my son's spring break moved to coincide with our block leave. ("DODDS re-schedules spring break for 1st ID schools," Dec. 21.) I have spoken to a number of 1st ID parents and all are in agreement that this is a wonderful move. I am that some individuals may be inconvenienced by this "terrible precedent for future deployments."

U.S. soldiers worldwide are currently changing their lives for the Army. We can not take back the time lost from our loved ones over the past 12 months. With previous deployments and training exercises, some have not been with their families for 30 consecutive days in 24 months or more. The very least we can do is take 30 days' leave and try to catch up on the lost birthdays, the lost holidays, bedtime stories, and the lost family games and such.

What about the children? Are they better off going to school during our block leave, taking a week or two off during block leave in addition to their spring

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break (most undoubtedly would), or making this change?

I understand there may be a need to re-schedule some sports events, but would it be better to have to forfeit due to the children being absent? I believe the best option has been taken.

In this Army we all make sacrifices, whether servicemember, family member or Department of Defense employee. We all need to take stock in our priorities and remember why we do what we do.

Staff Sgt. Kevin Harvey
 Forward Operating Base Darger, Iraq

Park that ticket somewhere

I guess I should feel complimented when people notice me walking with a limp and often just assume that I only sprained my ankle or injured my hip. The reality of it is that I lost my leg and now use a prosthetic limb to get around—but you won't hear me complain about that.

Twice in the last week, however, I have arrived home only to discover that someone had parked in my clearly marked handicapped parking spot. On both occasions, I took the effort to locate the person to ask them why they would park in a handicapped spot. I was surprised when they told me that they thought it was just a "place holder" for work vehicles or to just meet some regulations and that they knew that "handicapped individuals were not assigned PCS [permanent change of station] overseas."

What? Talk about discrimination! This sort of thinking could be further from the truth. Under the Americans With Disabilities Act, the military and all other federal agencies assign people with disabilities and other physical challenges overseas. Stars and Stripes even ran recently a front-page article explaining how the military is allowing combat disabled soldiers to remain on active-duty status ("For some, loss of limb no reason to quit military," Dec. 5).

It's more than just a matter of respect. Most often, through no fault of their own, our brave soldiers, people in general, and certainly the elderly who have experi-

enced traumatic health problems have earned the need for handicapped parking spaces. Before parking in only those reserved spaces, please really should pause to think about what they are doing. It's far from the same thing, but driving home and finding someone parked in your reserved spot is like finding some stranger sleeping in your bed, or like someone using your toothbrush.

Chuck Scholtz
 Frankfurt, Germany

What determines gas prices?

Last month on American Forces Network, an Army and Air Force Exchange Service spokesman announced that the price of gas was going up again. He stated that price-per-barrel-of-oil increases were the reason for the increase, but curiously failed to mention AAFES's policy to the gas prices to the average stateside price.

Guess what? For the past few days, AFN has reported that gas prices have fallen more than 10 cents per gallon in the States. So tell me, AAFES, are your prices tied to price-per-barrel-of-oil or average state-side prices? Both of them are down significantly, but today I heard that your prices will increase again Jan. 1.

We're already paying more than 40 cents more per gallon than the average stateside price. When will AAFES quit gouging us?

Master Sgt. Burl Stuebelied
 Ramstein, Germany

Tired of AAFES' reasoning

Well, here we are several months into dropping gas prices in the States with the Army and Air Force Exchange Service still holding firm on its higher price.

I've been using AAFES gas stamps continuously since 1969 and I can tell you there have been ups and downs. However, even my willingness to accept its reasoning has worn out.

We, as customers, have been told several stories on how AAFES derives its pricing method for gasoline. We've heard that it is based on the average price in the United States. Now on the radio, the AAFES spokesman says it is now based on the price of a barrel of crude. Everyone listening to AFN lately has heard that gas prices have been falling in the United States for more than 10 weeks and the average cost in the States is \$1.86. Unfortunately, I am still paying \$2.34 for my diesel coupons, which can only be redeemed off base.

Oh, by the way, AAFES also lists its costs involve operation of the on-base gas station and coupon printing. Then why is diesel more expensive if I can't get it on base. Does printing diesel coupons cost more than printing regular or premium coupons? Why doesn't AAFES come clean to its customers on exactly how it does its pricing?

If, for one, am writing my congressman and senator, asking for a congressional inquiry into its pricing practices. Maybe AAFES has outlived its usefulness and the time has come to look into outsourcing.

Gene Campbell
 Ramstein Air Base, Germany

Ramstein Air Base, Germany

Doonesbury



Big death tolls caused by lack of tidal gauges

By JOSEPH B. VERRENGIA
The Associated Press

DENVER — The catastrophic death toll in Asia caused by a massive tsunami might have been reduced had India and Sri Lanka been part of an international warning system designed to warn coastal communities about potentially deadly waves, scientists say.

The warning system is designed to alert nations that potentially destructive waves may hit their coastlines within three to 14 hours. Scientists said seismic networks recorded Sunday's massive earthquake, but without wave sensors in the region, there was no way to determine the direction a tsunami would travel.

A single wave station south of the earthquake's epicenter registered tsunami activity less than 2 feet high heading south toward Australia, researchers said.

The northern tip of the earthquake fault is located near the Andaman Islands, and tsunamis appear to have rushed eastward toward the Thai resort of Phuket on Sunday morning when the community was just stirring.

"They had no tidal gauges and they had no warning," said Waverly Person, a geophysicist at the National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, Colorado, which monitors seismic activity worldwide. "There are no buoys in the Indian Ocean and that's where this tsunami occurred."

Researchers say the earthquake broke on a fault line deep off the Sumatra coast, running north and south for about 600 miles or as far north as the Andaman and Nicobar islands between India and Myanmar.

"It's a huge rupture," said Charles McCreery, director of the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center near Honolulu. "It's conceivable that the sea floor deformed all the way along that rupture, and that's what initiates tsunamis."

Tsunamis as large and destructive as Sunday's typically happen only a few times in a century.

A tsunami is not a single wave, but a series of traveling ocean waves generated by geological disturbances near or below the ocean floor. With nothing to stop them, these waves can race across the ocean like the crack of a bullwhip, gaining momentum over thousands of miles.

Most are triggered by large earthquakes but they can be caused by landslides, volcanoes and even meteor impacts.

Most tsunamis occur in the Pacific because the ocean basin is rimmed by the Ring of Fire, a long chain of the Earth's most seismically active spots. Marine geologists recently have determined that under certain conditions, the U.S. East Coast and other heavily populated coastlines also could be vulnerable.

The international warning system was started in 1965, the year after tsunamis associated with a magnitude 9.2 temblor struck Alaska in 1964. It is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

However, India and Sri Lanka are not members.

The warning system analyzes earthquake information from several seismic networks, including the U.S. Geological Survey. The seismic information is fed into computer models that "picture" how and where a tsunami might form. It dispatches warnings about imminent tsunami hazards, including predictions how fast the waves are traveling and their expected arrival times in specific geographic areas.

Associated Press writer Michael Casey contributed to this report.



Top: A relative of a victim who was killed by powerful tsunami grieves as she walks away from a mass burial pit in Cuddalore, India, Monday.
Right: Refugees take their belongings to a shelter in Lancuk Village, Aceh Province, in Indonesia on Monday. Dozens of bodies littered the streets of Banda Aceh city Monday as soldiers and volunteers searched for survivors of the earthquake and tsunamis that killed at least 4,991 in Indonesia, officials said.

Asia got no tsunami warnings

Officials admit they failed to adequately warn public after quake

By MICHAEL CASEY
The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Asian officials conceded Monday that they failed to issue broad public warnings immediately after a massive undersea earthquake in Indonesia, which could have saved countless lives from the subsequent giant waves that smashed into nine countries as far away as Africa.

India said it would consider establishing a warning system, and Australia and Japan said they would help build it. One Australian official said it would take at least a year to set one up.

Also, Thailand's Meteorological Department said the country lacked an international warning system and proper coordination to get messages of impending disasters sent across the country.

"If we had the international warning system, we could give real-time warning to people," said Seismological Bureau official Sumalee Prachub.

Governments around the nation insisted they did not know the true nature of the threat because there was no international system in place to track tidal waves in the Indian Ocean where they are rare and they cannot afford to buy sophisticated equipment to build one.

And what warnings there were came too little, too late.

"No one ever told us that these things can be predicted and we can be told about them," said Sumana Ganuge, a shopowner in Colombo, Sri Lanka. "Next time, I hope our government can do this."

The magnitude 9.0 earthquake — the largest in 40 years — shifted huge geological plates beneath the sea northwest of Sumatra island, causing a massive and sudden displacement of millions on tons of water.

Indonesia villages closest to the temblor's epicenter were swamped within



People look at a submerged truck in the entrance of a supermarket at Patong Beach, Monday, in Phuket, Thailand.

minutes, but elsewhere the waves radiated outward, gathering speed and ferocity until they made landfall. The waves moved at speeds topping 500 mph.

Waves began pummeling southern Thailand about one hour after the earthquake. After 2½ hours, the torrents had traveled some 1,000 miles and slammed India and Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Maldives, Myanmar, and Bangladesh were also hit. Eventually they struck Somalia, on the east coast of Africa, where hundreds were reported killed.

The death toll Monday afternoon was at least 22,000, with millions left homeless.

Indonesian officials said they had no



way to know that the earthquake had caused the earthquake-driven waves, or tsunamis, or how dangerous they might have been.

"Unfortunately, we have no equipment here that can warn about tsunamis," said Budi Wahyu, an official with Indonesia's Meteorology and Geophysics Agency. "The instruments are very expensive and we don't have money to buy them."

But Thammasarote Smith, a former senior forecaster at Thailand's Meteorological Department, said governments could have done much more to warn people about the danger.

"The department had up to an hour to announce the emergency message and evacuate people, but they failed to do so," Thammasarote was quoted as saying in The Bangkok Post newspaper.

"It is true that an earthquake is unpredictable, but a tsunami, which occurs after an earthquake, is predictable."

Kathawudhi Malrairajanarati, the department's chief weather forecaster, said it issued warnings through radio and television beginning at 9 a.m. Sunday about a possible undertow along the southwest coast of Thailand, where tens of thousands of foreign tourists were vacationing. But the warnings came after the first waves hit. A Web site warning went up three hours later — but by then, at least 700 people had died in Thailand, including a jet-skiing grandson of revered monarch King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra refused to answer reporters' questions Tuesday about tsunami alerts. But Australian Prime Minister John Howard said he would investigate what role his country could play in setting up an Indian Ocean warning system.

Scientists said seismic networks in the region recorded Sunday's earthquake, but without ocean sensors tracking the path of the waves, there was just no way to determine the direction a tsunami would travel.

Europe tallies missing, dead from Asia quake

By D'ARCY DORAN
The Associated Press

LONDON — A British man in Sri Lanka recalled clinging to a floating refrigerator as massive tidal waves threatened to drag him and his son out to sea.

A day after a 9.0-magnitude undersea quake sent gigantic waves crashing into some of the region's most popular beaches, hundreds of Europeans remained stranded in Asia as their governments scrambled Monday to tally their dead and missing and to make arrangements to ferry the tourists out.

Tour operators throughout Europe on Monday canceled trips to Asian holiday destinations devastated by massive tidal waves following a huge earthquake in the Indian Ocean.

Many European governments advised their citizens against traveling to the Maldives, an archipelago popular with tourists, as well as tsunami-struck parts of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia and India.

Thousands of Europeans had been vacationing in sunny Southeast Asia for the Christmas holidays and governments reported at least two dozen Europeans died among the thousands killed across six Asian nations.



Metropolitan Police staff in north London provide a call service for British people worried about relatives or friends who may have been caught up in the earthquake which has shaken southeast Asia.

Duncan Ridegley, from Hertfordshire, north of London, recounted the horror Monday. "I managed to get a hold of my son's hand and reach safety," Ridegley said in a telephone interview with British Broadcasting Corp. radio. "There are about 30 of us Europeans stuck here with water all around us, with crocodiles and the like surrounding us."

"We can't get out," he said. "No one knows we're here."

Britain's Foreign Office confirmed 11 deaths. Earlier Monday, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw warned the country to brace for more deaths.

"We have had a number of deaths of British nationals reported to our embassies and high commissions but they have not

yet been confirmed. The numbers will be higher," Straw told BBC. Sixty-nine others were hospitalized, the Foreign Office said.

At least 11 Italians were killed, the Italian Foreign Ministry said Monday, nine at the Thai resort islands of Phuket and Phi Phi, and two in Sri Lanka. Many more Italians were missing and dozens were being treated in hospitals.

Norway's Foreign Ministry said family and friends reported 10 Norwegians dead — eight in Thailand and two in Sri Lanka. It was unable to immediately independently confirm the deaths.

Nine Swedes were reported killed and three Danes vacationing on the Thai island of Phuket, a popular holiday destination, were killed, the Foreign Ministry said in Copenhagen.

In Helsinki, Finland, the Foreign Ministry reported that a Finn was killed in Sri Lanka.

At least two Swedes were killed in Thailand, Kaarlo Laakso, a Swedish Embassy official in Bangkok, told state-run broadcaster SVT, and the Danish Foreign Ministry said three Danes were killed in Phuket.

France's deputy foreign minister reported that together a French cadet died — one in Sri Lanka, one in Thailand and the third in India.

Man recounts being caught in tsunami off of Sri Lanka

By MICHAEL DOBBS
The Washington Post

WELIGAMA, Sri Lanka — Disaster struck with stunning out of a faultlessly clear blue sky.

I was taking my morning swim around the island that my brother Geoff, a businessman, had bought on a whim a decade ago and turned into a tropical paradise 200 yards from one of the world's most beautiful beaches.

I was a quarter way around the island when I heard my brother shouting at me, "Come back! Come back! There's something strange happening with the sea." He was swimming behind me, but closer to the shore.

"I couldn't understand what the fuss was about. All seemed peaceful.

There was barely a ripple. My brother's house rested on a rock 60 feet above the level of the sea.

Then I noticed that the water around was rising, climbing up the rock walls of the island with astonishing speed. The vast circle of golden sand around Weligama Bay was disappearing rapidly, and the water had reached the level of the coastal road, fringed with palm trees.

"I swam to shore, my mind was momentarily befuddled by two conflicting impressions — the idyllic blue sky and the rapidly rising waters.

Within less than a minute, the water level had risen at least 15 feet, but the sea remained calm, with barely a wave in sight.

Within minutes, the beach and the area behind it had become an inland sea that rushed over the road and poured into the flimsy houses on the other side. The speed with which it all happened seemed like a scene from the

Bible, a natural phenomenon unlike anything I had experienced.

As the waters rose at an incredible rate, I half expected to catch sight of Noah's Ark. I grabbed a wooden catamaran that the local people used as a fishing boat. My brother jumped on the boat next to me. We bobbed up and down on the catamaran as the water rushed past us into the village beyond the road.

After a few minutes, the water stopped rising, and I felt it was safe to swim to the shore. What I did not realize was that the floodwaters would recede as quickly

place.

I was worried about my wife, who was on the beach when I went for my swim. I eventually found her walking along the road, dazed but happy to be alive. She had been trying to wade back to us island when the water carried her across the road and into someone's back yard. At one point she was underwater, struggling for breath. She finally grabbed onto a rope and climbed into a tree, escaping the waters that raged beneath her.

Our children were still asleep when the tsunami struck at 9:15.

They woke up to find the bay practically drained of water and their parents walking back across the narrow channel to safety.

The waves raged around the island for the rest of the day, alternately rising and receding.

It took us many hours to realize the scale of the disaster, because we could see only the tiny part in front of us. The road from Weligama to Galle was cut in many places. The coastal road was littered with carcasses of boats, dogs and even a few dead sharks. Helicopters flew overhead and loudspeaker vans warned residents to leave low-lying areas for fear of more tsunamis.

My brothers' little island was largely intact, although a piece of our gate ended up on the seashore half a mile away. The water rose about 20 feet toward the house.

We have no water and no electricity, and are cut off from the rest of Sri Lanka. We are existing on cold ham and turkey sandwiches, leftovers from Christmas dinner.

The holiday that we planned and dreamed about for many months is in ruins. But we feel fortunate — fortunate to be alive.

Immigrants in U.S. anxiously await word from southern Asia

Officials ready to send aid, supplies

By DAVID N. GOODMAN
The Associated Press

DETROIT — Anu Gopalakrishnan spoke to her mother and friends in the southeastern Indian city of Madras, but a grim uncertainty looms for many immigrant communities in the United States as they await word after tsunami ravaged nine countries.

A 9.0-magnitude earthquake struck beneath the Indian Ocean off the coast of Indonesia early Sunday, the most powerful tremor in four decades, sending walls of water crashing ashore in the region's waterfront communities.

Officials said the death toll would rise, warning that disease outbreaks were possible.

Meanwhile, in the Detroit suburb of Westland, Gopalakrishnan was reflective. Residents of Madras, a waterfront city, are accustomed to seasonal storms but have no experience with tidal waves, she said.

"I was on that beach," said Gopalakrishnan, 29.

"I don't know if those families are still alive.

"It's left all the people in Madras in a state of shock. I'm waiting for a few of my friends to call me and tell me what has happened to them and to their friends in beachfront properties."

Immigrants from across southern Asia were preparing

donations for friends, family and strangers hit by the tragedy.

Anand Kumar, who founded a Web site for Michigan's Indian community, said he was working to put together a French campaign in the state, which has about 54,000 people of Asian Indian heritage.

In California, where roughly half the Indonesians in the United States live, about 150 people gathered at an Indonesian language Catholic mass late Sunday at St. Stephen's Church in Monterey Park.

Many worshippers said they were unaware of the disaster until they arrived at Mass.

"Any natural disaster is beyond our control and all we can do is pray for comfort for the people," the Rev. Yosef Dowd said through a translator.

"It's not only prayers — we'll see what material needs they need and support them there as well."

Dowa, who is posted at the Los Angeles Archdiocese until 2006, said he had not yet contacted his family in Indonesia.

Clay Johnson, a native Minnesota who now teaches in Japan, was in Madras with friends on Christmas Eve. He e-mailed home soon after the waves struck.

"It was kind of a scary moment for us, because we knew that was where he was," his father, Steve Johnson, said.

Generous gift

CO DENVER — Residents of Samaritan House didn't know what to expect when the bearded, middle-aged man parked his sport utility vehicle in front of the downtown homeless shelter Christmas Eve.

The man walked into the building, pulled out a thick roll of \$100 bills and began passing them out to each of the approximately 300 residents.

As a crowd gathered, the man said he had once been homeless and knew what it was like to be in need. He did not identify himself and said only that he lived in Denver and had also distributed money at a Las Vegas shelter.

Lutefisks support GIs

MN GLENWOOD — Each year, Mike Field ships anywhere from 200,000 to 300,000 pounds of lutefisk from his small shop here to customers all over the United States.

But his latest order of the stinky fish crosses a new horizon.

One lutefisk-loving soldier has ordered 25 pounds of the pungent lye-soaked fish to be shipped to Afghanistan as a "treat" for the servicemen and -women stationed there.

The order came from Mike Lindemoe, a serviceman with the U.S. Army stationed in Afghanistan — and yes, Lindemoe's the one who called it a "treat," Field said.

Field said that Lindemoe told him he wouldn't mind if it costs \$50 a plate, he wants the lutefisk, which is a holiday tradition for many with Scandinavian heritage.

Child welfare warned

FL ORLANDO — Days before a 4-year-old girl died from a blow to the head in a filthy motel room shared with five siblings and her parents, the state child welfare agency was told about her living conditions but declined to investigate, according to documents released Wednesday.

Kai Gadison was found dead Monday after her mother called 911 to report the child wasn't breathing. She died of blunt force trauma to the head, an autopsy report said. The mother, 27-year-old Kenya Hill, initially was held on charges of child abuse and violation of probation, but was charged Wednesday night with murder.

The other five children were being cared for in a foster home.

Busting out the boat

RI LINCOLN — A Woonsocket man was restrained at gunpoint by a state Department of Environmental Management officer following a traffic dispute.

Stephen Chauvin, 24, was charged with felony assault with a dangerous weapon on Tuesday. The DEM officer spotted him walking from his parked car toward another motorist with a 2-foot-long retractable boat on Route 116 shortly after 9 a.m.

Chauvin and the other driver had both pulled over to the side of the road.



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

The DEM officer witnessed the confrontation and ordered Chauvin to put the boat down. When he failed to comply, the officer drew his weapon. Chauvin then stopped and was later charged by police.

Locks of rehabilitation

HI HONOLULU — Employees at Salon Bobbi N' Guy received an unexpected Christmas gift this season — locks of hair from an inmate in jail on drug charges.

Salon vice president Alex Choi said the hair was a welcome gift because it will be sent to Locks of Love, a nationwide nonprofit group that collects hair to make wigs for financially disadvantaged children suffering from hair loss because of illness.

The black hair — enough for about five wigs — arrived on Christmas Eve from a male inmate at the Waiaua Correctional Facility who said he wanted to make a sacrifice as proof of his sincere wish to turn his life around, Choi said.

Ominous message

NJ ALLENHURST — The decades-old message scrawled on the bottom of a dresser drawer was ominous — alluding to a murder and detailing the location of the victim's body.



Sundogs of winter

A sundog shines in the subzero temperatures as Don Baxter clears snow on Alkali Creek Road in Billings, Mont. Sundogs form because ice crystals refract each color of light differently.

But after fruitless digging by police in a back yard in the Monmouth County borough Wednesday, the message may prove more useful to a local author than to authorities.

Shovels, a backhoe and ground-penetrating radar failed to unearth any human remains from the yard of Richard Ferricola, a doctor and author who says he might use the detail in his next book.

"My immediate decision was that we had to resolve this because I didn't want people saying a month or a year or 10 years from now, 'What happened to the body in your backyard?'" he said.

Fast food hero

LA BATON ROUGE — A McDonald's worker ran to the rescue of an allegedly drunk driver whose car was rolling toward a canal, pulling the man from behind the wheel about 10 feet before the vehicle fell into the water and submerged.

"He saved that man's life," fellow McDonald's employee Priscilla Morgan said of co-worker Tomio Harris.

The pair were working early Thursday morning when driver Brian Broussard, 20, pulled up to the drive-thru service window.

East Baton Rouge sheriff's deputies say when Broussard's foot slipped off the brake, the car began to roll toward a canal across the street from the McDonald's. Harris took off after it, pulling Broussard from the still-moving car just before it plunged into the canal.

Advanced pews available

OH AKRON — Joe and Kathy Tricaso weren't taking any chances on not getting a seat for Mass on Christmas Eve.

The couple, who live in the Akron suburb of Green, spent \$85 in a church auction last summer to reserve a pew.

Their investment paid off. The parking lot at Queen of Heaven Catholic Church was filling fast when they arrived an hour before Friday's 4 p.m. service.

"The rule is you're not allowed to save seats, and kind, loving Christians can get pretty mean-spirited if you tell them they can't sit down when they see an empty seat on a pew," Joe Tricaso said.

Here's mud in your way

VA RICHMOND — An American Airlines plane preparing for takeoff went off the runway and became stuck in mud Thursday at Richmond International Airport, shutting the airport's two main runways to all incoming flights, an airport spokesman said.

American Airlines Flight 1239 bound for Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport was mired at the grassy juncture of the airport's two main runways around 8:20 a.m., airport spokesman Troy Bell said.

None of the 129 passengers or five crew members on the MD-80 was injured, Bell said. All passengers had been evacuated by 10:30 a.m.



Floppy the snowman A snowman yard ornament seems to relax on a bench as snow falls along Quinlan Street in Iuka, Miss.



Outta the way! Ronnie Martinez of Calallen, Texas, takes a ride down a hill at West Guth Park in Corpus Christi.



Parking nightmare People walk through the Wal-Mart Supercenter parking lot in Buckhorn, Pa., towards their vehicles as a driver looks for one of the few empty spaces left in the lot while a shopper places bags into a SUV.



Hands-on job Hand prints are visible in the heavy frost covering a door at the Hippodrome in Eveleth, Minn.



Icicles abound Frigid cold and wind from Lake Michigan turn this shore marker at 31st Street Beach into a giant icicle in Chicago.



Consuming blaze A home occupied by Debbie Hunt and Frank Holzkamp burns in McCracken County, Ky. The residents and their dog escaped and were not injured.

Scalding death

MI ROCHESTER HILLS — A pregnant woman was charged with killing her boyfriend's toddler daughter by scalding her in what prosecutors say was 147-degree water, then ignoring her suffering for several hours.

Letitia Ann Johnson, 27, of Orion Township was charged Wednesday with second-degree murder in the death of 22-month-old Jasmine Phillips.

Johnson gave the girl a bath Saturday night in scalding water, then put her to bed, according to her statements to police. Johnson was aware Jasmine was in pain, according to prosecutors.

Louie D. Phillips, 26, found his daughter Sunday morning and called 911, police said. She was pronounced dead at a hospital. The medical examiner ruled the death a homicide caused by dehydration from extensive third-degree burns.

Traffic deaths analysis

HI HILO — Big Island motorists died in traffic crashes at more than three times the rate of Oahu drivers from 2000 to 2003, while the county's frequency of vehicle fatalities, when adjusted for population, was nearly twice that of Maui and Kauai counties during that time, a state analysis found.

The statistics were contained in a study recently released by the state Department of Health.

The per-capita fatality rate for vehicle occupants was similar when figures were adjusted to account for the counties' different sizes. Deaths from motorcycle, bicycle and pedestrian accidents were excluded from the study.

State loses residents

MA BOSTON — Massachusetts was the only state in the nation to lose residents in 2004, U.S. Census data shows.

The state lost an estimated 3,852 people, or about 1.1 percent, in the last year, despite continuing growth in immigration to the Bay State, the Boston Sunday Globe reported.

Paul E. Harrington, an economist at Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, attributed the loss to a stagnant job market. He said the decline could be an ominous sign for the state.

"Population loss is a pretty fundamental number," he said.

Offsetting the trend is a boost in foreign immigrants, Harrington said, who are counted by the Census but often don't show up in job or unemployment data. That suggests that these workers are being paid under the table, which could create a "long-term economic growth problem," he said.

Line drawn at \$104M

FL MIAMI — A Florida appeals court threw out as "shockingly excessive" a jury's \$104 million verdict over a teenager who was left severely brain-damaged after becoming trapped underwater by the suction of a pool drain.

The 3rd District Court of Appeal on Wednesday ordered a new trial in the lawsuit brought by the family of Lorenzo Peterson against

pool maker Sta-Rite Industries. Peterson died earlier this year, after the trial.

He nearly drowned while swimming with friends at age 15 when a Sta-Rite pump sucked his arm into an uncovered drain at an apartment complex in North Miami in 2000.

Six adults were unable to free the teen. He was eventually released when a police officer arrived and shut off the power.

West Nile virus down

NY ROCHESTER — Cases of West Nile virus plummeted in New York state in 2004, health officials said.

The mosquito-borne illness prompted some panic when it first hit America in 1999, but drew little attention this year in New York.

In all, 10 people tested positive statewide for the virus in 2004, compared with 71 last year. Around 200 birds had confirmed West Nile this year, down from 1,367 in 2003.

Experts aren't sure yet if cases will remain scarce or whether the drop is simply part of a down cycle in the virus' lifespan.

Land preservation

VA CHARLOTTESVILLE — A preservation agreement will keep about 1,060 acres surrounding Monticello — land that was once part of Thomas Jefferson's plantation — much as it was in his day.

The nonprofit Thomas Jefferson Foundation announced a plan to place the land surrounding the historic house in permanent conservation easement, which cedes all development and division rights to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, a state agency committed to preserving areas of scenic and historical value.

"The mission of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation is preservation and education," said its president, Dan Jordan.

The areas placed under easement include three separate tracts: a 418-acre parcel known as the Home Farm, the 560-acre Tufton property and 80 acres bordering the Rivanna River. All the land was once part of the original Monticello plantation site.

Chicago-centric auction

IL CHICAGO — Dyeing the Chicago River green on St. Patrick's Day: \$7,600. Placing the winning bid for a halved city tradition: Priceless.

The city's eBay auction of Chicago-specific experiences and treasures ended Wednesday night after raising more than \$242,000 for the city's arts and cultural programs — including the winning \$7,600 bid for the opportunity to dye the Chicago River green March 17.

The top bid came in at \$21,000 for a wedding package that includes catering for 100 in the city's ornate Chicago Cultural Center overlooking Michigan Avenue. The second biggest draw — dinner for 10 with television broadcaster Bill Kurtis, accompanied by a documentary about the winning bidder's life — went for \$18,600.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press

FACES

No research for this investigator

When Louise Lombard landed a role as the new crime-scene investigator on "CSI," a producer suggested she prepare by visiting a morgue.

"I turned to her and said, 'That's where the acting comes in,'" Lombard said. "There's no way I'm going to see a corpse just in the name of research. I'm dedicated, but not THAT dedicated."

Lombard became a household name in the United Kingdom on the BBC series "The House of Eliott." She had a costarring role in the movie "Hidalgo."

On "CSI," Lombard plays a crime-scene investigator determined to work on the graveyard shift with star William B. Davis.

"She's not a scientist by instinct," Lombard, 34, told TV Guide for its Dec. 26 issue. "She's a cop. Her interest is in justice."

Still, Lombard hasn't been able to avoid the grimmer tasks of her pseudo-job. In her first scene, she inspects a pool of vomit, and it didn't get any better.

"The next shot was me putting my hand down a toilet," she said. "I've waited my whole career to do that."

Bulking up for big roles

Renée Zellweger isn't the only actress packing on the pounds for plum roles these days.

Sarah Steele, the 16-year-old actress who plays the overweight daughter of Adam Sandler and Tea Leoni in the comedy-drama "Spanish," had to gain between 15 and 17 pounds for the role.

"And then I had my fat suit. It was cotton and spandex. It was pretty uncomfortable," the 5-foot-tall Steele told the Los Angeles Times for Sunday's editions.

Steele normally fluctuates between a size 1 and 2. She said she did not use a special diet to gain the weight because the food on the set was so good.

"I was the only actress who could eat it," she said.

Drug companies dodging Moore

Some pharmaceutical companies are telling their employees to look out for the scruffy guy in the baseball cap. The Houston Chronicle reported Saturday that at least six drug companies have released internal communications telling employees to be wary of filmmaker Michael Moore.

Moore's targets have included General Motors ("Roger & Me"), the gun lobby (the Oscar-winning "Bowling for Columbine") and President Bush ("Fahrenheit 9/11").

Moore, normally seen sporting a beard and a ball cap, has now set his sights on the health care industry, including insurance companies, HMOs, the Food and Drug Administration and drug companies.

"We ran a story in our online newspaper saying Moore is embarking on a documentary and if you see a scruffy guy in a baseball cap, you'll know who it is," said John Ledner, a spokesman for Pfizer Global Research and Development.

In September and October, Wyeth, AstraZeneca and GlaxoSmithKline, the second-largest in retail sales, sent out Moore alerts, instructing employees that questions posed by the media or filmmakers should be handled by corporate communications.

Former Raider back in trouble

Former pro football center Barret Robbins was arrested on battery and drunk and disorderly conduct charges after he allegedly hit a night club security guard, authorities said.

The former Oakland Raider and Pro Bowler allegedly struck a guard after he was told the bar he was trying to enter was closed, according to the San Francisco Sheriff's Department. He was arrested around Friday morning.

The All-Pro center is best remembered for his infamous disappearance the night before the 2003 Super Bowl in San Diego. He spent Super Bowl Sunday in a hospital and later acknowledged he stopped taking his medicine for depression and bipolar disorder.

From The Associated Press

It's all about getting in THE GAME

Video games become crucial medium for musical success

BY JOSE ANTONIO VARGAS

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON

The Game — aka Jayceon Taylor — isn't a star. Not yet, at least. But it helps that big-shot producer Dr. Dre is on his side, working on a few cuts on the Game's debut album, set to drop in mid-January.

To break into the sardine-can hip-hop scene, the Game needs to tour, hit the MTV videos, make the rounds on FMV.

One more thing: "It'd be really, really hot to get on Madden," the 25-year-old MC says from a recording studio in California's San Fernando Valley.

He's talking about the most lucrative franchise in the multibillion-dollar video game industry, selling more than 40 million units since its launch in 1989. "Madden NFL 2004" was last year's top-selling game, and "Madden NFL 2005" is poised to be near the top again this year.

The competition to get onto the game's soundtrack — a lineup of thumping, furious, go-play-ball songs — is fierce. Last year, record labels sent more than 2,500 songs to vie for the game's 21 tracks, which included Hoobastank's "Same Direction," New Found Glory's "This Disaster" and Yung Wu's "Yung Wu Anthem."

In the past three years, particularly this year, the link between the music industry and the video-game industry — the former in a revenue slump, the latter on a revenue high — has gotten only closer.

For example, the rock-punk band Incubus wrote music for "Halo 2," and Snoop Dogg's cover of the Doors classic "Riders on the Storm" made its debut on "Need for Speed Underground 2." Both games were released last month.

For artists as established as Green Day, whose "American Idiot" has just been nominated for a Grammy as record of the year, winning a spot on a Madden soundtrack is like having a 20-second commercial on "Monday Night

Football" or "Desperate Housewives." For an up-and-comer such as the Game, it's an even bigger deal, the kind of break that brings instant celebrity. For both, it's a new route to an old audience, as sure a bet as any when it comes to grabbing a prized demographic: 18-to-34-year-old males, 75 percent of whom play video games, according to Nielsen Interactive Entertainment.

"I play Madden, like, 30 hours or 40 hours a week, easy," said Nick Schwartz, 24. The Washington software technician says he first heard the song "American Idiot" on "Madden NFL 2005," not on the radio or MTV. The song is also the title of Green Day's latest album, which scored six Grammy nominations.

Justin Yu, a friend of Schwartz's, interrupts. The 27-year-old Web designer, a "huge basketball fanatic," says he discovered the rapper Fabolous two years ago, on "NBA Live 2003." With his busy work schedule, "playing basketball means taking out the PlayStation."

In the past five years, that 18-to-34 male demographic has been increasingly turning on the television not to watch a show but to play video games, says Michael Dowling, general manager of Nielsen Interactive.

"Music in video game soundtracks has become a place for retro-classics, to hear new artists and for exciting artists to stretch and do different kinds of material," said Casey Patterson of the MTV spinoff Spike TV, the self-described first network for men.

On Nov. 30 Spike TV, with Artemis Records, released a compilation CD, "Hits Vol. 1: Best of Video Game Music," and recently held its second annual Video Game Awards. Snoop Dogg, a big gamer himself, hosted.

The convergence of music and video games is inevitable to Cary Sherman, president of the Recording Industry Association of America.

"There's been more of an effort in the past year by video game companies and record companies to find a match and create a game that's bigger than the sum of its parts. It's great for the video game. It's great for the artist," he said.



Jayceon Taylor, aka the Game, has his sites set on getting one of his songs on the next installment of the Madden football franchise.

AP photos



Zellweger



Moore



Robbins



Snoop Dogg, center, performs his host duties at Spike TV's Video Game Awards on Dec. 14 in Santa Monica, Calif.

Yushchenko claims Ukraine presidency

BY ALEKSANDAR VASOVIC
The Associated Press

KIEV, Ukraine — Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko celebrated his apparently decisive triumph in Ukraine's protracted presidential contest Monday, thanking protesters who spent weeks camped out in the capital's frigid streets for securing his electoral victory and the nation's freedom.

Three exit polls gave Yushchenko a 15 to 20 percentage point lead over Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich.

But the official vote count gave Yushchenko a narrower lead: With ballots from 98.49 percent of precincts counted by 1 p.m., Yushchenko was leading with 52.29 percent compared to Yanukovich's 43.92 percent.

"Now, today, the Ukrainian people have won. I congratulate you," the Western-leaning Yushchenko told a jubilant crowd in Kiev's Independence Square, the center of massive protests following the Nov. 21 runoff that was annulled after allegations of fraud.

"We have been independent for 14 years but we were not free," he said. "Now we can say this is a thing of the past. Now we are facing an independent and free Ukraine."

But Yanukovich had not conceded defeat and Nestor Shufrych, a lawmaker with Yanukovich ally, told reporters the prime minister's campaign would appeal.



Opposition presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko greets his supporters during a victory rally at Independence Square in Kiev early Monday. Yushchenko claimed victory in Ukraine's fiercely contested presidential election.

Results were trickling in from two regions in pro-Yanukovich territory in eastern Ukraine. Central Election Commission chairman Yaroslav Danylovych urged political workers to do their jobs. "Put logical issues aside. The state is

waiting for results," he said.

Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, whose own rise to power on a wave of peaceful protests in November 2003 inspired Ukraine's opposition, congratulated Yushchenko in a Ukrainian-language

message delivered over Ukrainian television. Saakashvili, who attended law school in then-Soviet Ukraine, apparently is first foreign leader to publicly recognize Yushchenko's victory.

Poland's former President Lech Walesa told the Polish news agency PAP that Yushchenko's victory meant that "Ukraine on its road to freedom and democracy made a small move towards Europe."

Yushchenko was not taking chances. He called his supporters back out onto Independence Square on Monday afternoon to defend the election victory, if necessary, and asked for their help in what he called the main task facing the nation: forming a trustworthy government.

Sure of victory, Yushchenko backers appeared to be taking a rest after weeks camped out in Kiev. About 5,000 gathered in Independence Square on Sunday night to hear his victory speech, setting off fireworks in celebration.

Earlier, Yushchenko said at his campaign headquarters that Ukraine was beginning "a new political life."

"I am convinced that it is fashionable to be a citizen of Ukraine. It is stylish. It is beautiful. Three or four months ago, few people knew where Ukraine was," he said. "Today almost the whole world starts its day from thinking about what is happening in Ukraine."

Karzai holds first Cabinet meeting

BY PAUL HAVEN
The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghan President Hamid Karzai held his first Cabinet meeting on Monday, urging his ministers to avoid political intrigue and work together for the future of this war-battered country.

Karzai swore in the new Cabinet last week, brushing aside several wardlords in favor of professionals with university degrees.

He left Yunus Qanouni, his prime opponent in October elections, out of the government, saying he did so in order to allow Qanouni to start an opposition party.

The president said he would support the creation of an opposition, saying it was in the interest of Afghanistan's fledgling democracy. But on Monday, he made clear that no member of his government should wade into political waters.

"I hope all of our ministers in the Cabinet, if they have any link with political parties, they should resign from those parties," Karzai said ahead of the meeting at the presidential palace. "If they do, then the people of Afghanistan will trust our Cabinet and be confident that it will work for them." Karzai's new justice minister, Sarwar Danish, left his political party on Monday ahead of the Cabinet session.

Karzai also stressed transparency and accountability, saying all Cabinet ministers must make

public their personal holdings in order to guard against corruption.

The president stressed improvements to the economy, education and security as goals of his government, and said he would dispatch ministers to every province in the far-flung country so that the people got to know them.

"I want a Cabinet that is at the service of the people, and which participates in the reconstruction of the country," said Karzai, who was sworn in earlier this month as Afghanistan's first democratically-elected president.

Afghanistan is still recovering from more than a quarter-century of warfare. Most of its infrastructure is in tatters and its army is struggling to cope with a stubborn Taliban insurgency. Its economy, which is largely reliant on foreign aid, risks being swamped by a booming drug trade that has flooded the world with cheap heroin.

Karzai, who recently declared a "holy war" against drug trafficking, said fighting the trade would be a hallmark of his administration.

"We don't want to be known in the world as drug traffickers," Karzai said.

Karzai gave the ministers a week to report back to him on their long and short term plans. "Security and prosperity is the basis of our work," Karzai said. "We have a big responsibility on our shoulders and we must fulfill the promises we have made to our people."

Mixed results in Jordan terror trial

BY JAMAL HALABY
The Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — Jordan's military court on Monday acquitted 13 Muslim militants — including three Saudi fugitives — of conspiring to commit terror attacks against U.S. targets in Jordan, but sentenced 11 of them to 15 years terms for possessing explosives.

Two defendants — Jordanian Saud al-Khalayleh and Isam al-Barqawi — were acquitted for lack of evidence in charges that they possessed explosives and plotted attacks.

The prosecution charged the 13-member cell — including

three Saudi fugitives and 10 Jordanians in police custody — of possessing and intending to use explosives and conspiring to carry out terror attacks. The prosecution charged the 13 men with targeting the U.S. Embassy in Amman and Jordanian military bases near the Iraqi border where the militants believed American troops were stationed.

The verdicts can be appealed. No attacks had been carried out when police uncovered the plot in December 2002.

Only one of the defendants, Zuhair Shafiq, has confessed to plotting terrorist attacks.

The other nine Jordanians in custody had pleaded innocent and

said they were coerced into signing guilty confessions. None of the accused are suspected of belonging to al-Qaida. Jordanian security officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

EXCHANGE RATES

	Military rates	Dollar rates
Euro (dollars)	\$1,388.00	\$0.7204
British pound	\$1.57	\$0.6271
Japanese yen (dec. 28)	101.00	\$0.0094
South Korean won (dec. 28)	1,261.00	\$0.0008
Commercial rates		
Bahrain (Dhār)	\$1,751.44	
Denmark (kroner)	1,244.6	
Denmark (kroner)	\$1,338.73 (12/27)	
Egypt (pound)	7,722.1	
Hong Kong (dollar)	78.12	
Hungary (forint)	16,224.2	
Indonesia (rupiah)	1,335.00	
Iceland (krona)	60.37	
Israel (sheqel)	4,335.00	
Japan (yen)	104.08	
Kuwait (dinar)	2,294.61	
Norway (kroner)	5.78	
Philippines (peso)	6,245.00	
Saudi Arabia (riyāl)	1,579.00	
Saudi Arabia (riyāl)	1,629.00	
South Korea (won)	1,063.50	
Taiwan (new dollar)	18.23	
Thailand (baht)	38.62	
Turkey (lira)	1,358.00 (12/27)	

(Military exchange rates are those available to U.S. troops at military facilities in the country of issuance of the currency. For example, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For non-military use, see Germany (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany). For other countries, see the issuing facility. Commercial rates are inter-bank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is expressed in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollar-to-euro.)

PRECIOUS METALS

London as of Friday (closed for holiday)	
Gold	\$440.30
Silver	\$10.80

INTEREST RATES

Federal Reserve	5.25
Prime rate	5.25
Discount rate	2.25
3-month bill	2.25
3-month bill	2.20
30-year bond	4.51

Sources: The Associated Press, Bank of America

Cents and Sensibility

Money tip of the day

Tips for return success

The nation's annual Trek to the Return Counter exercise is nearly here.

ConsumerReports.org, the online site of the popular consumer magazine, has a few tips to increase your chance of a happy resolution.

■ **Arrive armed with a sales receipt.** This is the swiftest method of slicing through initial confusion and smoothing the transaction.

■ **Don't assume a clerk's no is the final word on the matter.**

Take the issue to another employee, who may understand the store's return rules better (or worse) than the initial clerk. If all else fails, speak to the manager.

■ **Don't discard tags or other product packaging** until you're positive you'll keep the item. With some electronic items, doing so can result in a hefty restocking fee.

■ **Above all: Be polite.** Store clerks see the worst of humans' dealings with each other, so a smile and beneficent attitude can go a long way toward a satisfying experience.



EUROPEAN FORECAST

- Benelux:** Cloudy with rain/snow showers. Highs are in the upper 30s to lower 40s.
- Britain, Ireland:** Mostly cloudy with rain/showers. Highs are in the low to upper 40s.
- Croatia and Bosnia:** Cloudy with rain/showers and isolated thunderstorms and strong winds. Highs are in the mid to upper 40s.
- France:** Mostly cloudy with rain/showers. Highs in the lower 30s to lower 40s to the north and in the lower 50s to the south.
- Northern Germany:** Cloudy with rain/snow showers. Highs in the lower 30s to upper 30s.
- Southern Germany:** Cloudy with rain/snow showers. Highs are in the 30s.
- Hungary:** Cloudy rain/snow showers. Highs are in the upper 30s to low 40s.
- Northern Italy:** Cloudy with rain/showers and isolated thunderstorms. Highs are in the low 40s to low 50s.
- Southern Italy:** Cloudy with rain/showers, isolated thunderstorms and strong winds. Highs are in the mid to upper 50s.
- Kosovo:** Cloudy with rain/showers, isolated thunderstorms and strong winds. Highs are in the 40s.
- Norway:** Cloudy with snow to the north and rain to the south. Highs are in the low 30s to low 40s.
- Portugal, Spain:** Mostly cloudy to cloudy with rain/showers. Highs are in the 50s.
- Turkey:** Mostly cloudy with rain/showers. Highs will be in the mid 50s to low 60s.

AFRICA

Cape Town	79	63	Mogadishu	91	73
Dakar	89	84	Nairobi	75	57
Freetown	89	71	Rabat	69	47
Harare	89	72	Tripoli	66	50

THE WORLD

Amsterdam	45	39	Manila	86	72
Bahrain	75	57	Mexico City	76	48
Beijing	62	31	Montreal	42	31
Buenos Aires	63	31	Osaka	76	55
Burmah	68	61	Rio de Jan	82	72
Calcutta	79	66	Sao Paulo	83	38
Hanoi	34	28	Sofia	63	38
Hong Kong	74	63	Sydney	83	63
London	57	48	Tokyo	57	47

MIDEAST



For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at <http://www.sembach.af.mil> or <http://news.public.sembach.af.mil>

SUN & MOON

Sunrise (Baghdad)	7:06AM	Today	7:06AM	Tomorrow
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	8:24AM		8:24AM	8:24AM
Sunset (Baghdad)	5:04PM		5:05PM	5:05PM
Sunset (Frankfurt)	4:31PM		4:31PM	4:31PM

Last 8 days
 New moon
 First 8 days
 Full moon

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

Allison, Tex.	46	30	Colorado	35	21
Alton, Ohio	34	23	Conn. S.C.	52	37
Alton, N.Y.	59	37	Delaware	50	37
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Fla.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Georgia	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Ill.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Ind.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Iowa	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Kentucky	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	La.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Maine	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Maryland	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Mass.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Mich.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Miss.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Mo.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	N.H.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	N.J.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	N.M.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	N.Y.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Pa.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	R.I.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	S.C.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Tenn.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Texas	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Va.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Vt.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	W.V.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Wis.	59	34
Alton, N.C.	54	33	Wyo.	59	34

THE UNITED STATES TODAY



Scheduled to ETS or PCS?

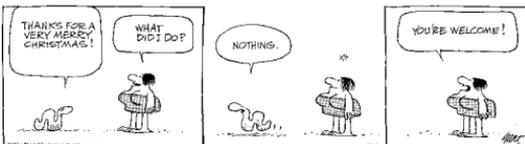
Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

STARS AND STRIPES Your Hometown Newspaper

Forkrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



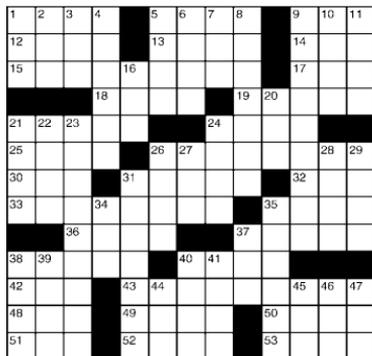
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Chatters away
5 Unclear image
9 Clothing protector
12 Jai —
13 Croupier's prop
14 A Gabor sister
15 Bought with borrowed money
17 Doggy doc
18 Collections
19 Skin
21 Mails
24 Needy
25 Notion
26 1977 movie hit
30 Thanksgiving abbr.
31 Knew how to
32 Evicerate
33 Gilitch makers
35 Gambling game
36 Bar
37 Tailor further
38 Open area in a forest
40 China-Russia border river
42 Throw your hat into the ring
43 Raven's call
48 Easy as —
49 Hambletonian gait
50 Pedestal occupant
51 Spill-down

Down

- 13 Fired person's pay
24 Cronies
26 Earth
27 Wine cask
28 Mysterious character
29 Pack away
31 Attorney's hirers
34 Frenzied
35 Miss Piggy's love
37 Capek drama
38 Snatch
39 Garage job
40 Revlon rival
41 Apportion
44 Mound stat
45 Praiseful work
46 Caviar
47 Shade source

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-28

CRYPTOQUIP

O CAXYOIAB ZUXZ QJHJLA
Z AXDUOLV X YXHXIA
DYXQ HOVZ GA DXYAB

X YXGJC YAXBAC.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU'RE SELLING CHRISTMAS TREES, YOU MIGHT TRY AND GET YOURSELF ALL SPRUCED UP.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals S

Little privacy in hospital gowns

Dear Abby: In reply to the letter from "Offended in the South," regarding hospital gowns, I understand a person's need for modesty. However, I am a health-care provider, and I see the other side of the picture.

As a paramedic, we are constantly disrobing patients (including cutting clothing off) to gain access to areas that need examination and treatment. Hospital gowns give us access to IV lines, EKG monitoring, and defibrillation and other medical equipment.

I am always conscious of my patients' need for privacy and re-cover them after I have examined them. Hospitals do provide robes for patients that will cover their backsides.

I encourage all hospital patients to request a robe besides the hospital gown they receive upon admission.

—**Khrysten, Port Edwards, Wis.**
Dear Khrysten: I'm sure many readers will be interested to know that such garments are available upon request. Read on:

Dear Abby



Dear Abby: Some years back, I was in a hospital that offered a unique hospital gown. It was extremely large and had three sleeves. The patient put the left sleeve over the left arm, the right sleeve over the right arm, and then the gown was passed around the back, and the third sleeve placed over the left arm again. I remember my entire body was covered and I was very comfortable. I wish I could recall the name of that hospital.

—**H.E. in Florida**

Dear H.E.: It's nice to know that such a garment exists, but

how practical can it be for examinations or other emergency procedures?

Dear Abby: Five years ago, I had the same complaint as "Offended." I am 6 feet tall and weighed 225 pounds. For years I complained to the doctors about the fact that the gowns were so short. Finally, I went to the fabric store and bought two yards of fabric and a pattern for a wrap-around sundress. The total cost was \$12.95. I made it long — about 8 inches below my knee — and carried it with me in a tote bag.

—**Marce in Houston**

Dear Marce: That's a practical solution for a person who's handy with a needle — the sewing kind, that is.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the internet at <http://www.uspress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NACAL

--	--	--	--	--	--

FOOLI

--	--	--	--	--	--

YONIFT

--	--	--	--	--	--

REMPIT

--	--	--	--	--	--

Answer:

--	--	--	--	--	--

©2004 Tribune Media Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
www.jumble.com
Jumbles: KNAVE DITTY GAITY SPONGE
Answer: What the codd concentrated on in history class — GETTING "DATES"

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argentin



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon. (ANSWERS TOMORROW)

Move stressful, but give it a chance

Dear Annie: I have been married for 25 years and love my husband dearly. Three months ago, "Nelson" was offered a good job in Maryland. However, it meant we had to move five hours from my children and grandchildren, and it is tearing me apart. I thought I would be able to handle the distance, but I can't. My daughter is now separated from her husband, and I feel I should be there for her and the children. My husband has said that if I am so unhappy, he will give up the job and we will move back. But, Annie, I know that he is enjoying his new position, and I don't want to make him move.

I am depressed. I cry a lot. I have gotten a job in a large office, but still am lonely for my family and friends. I said I would give it a year, but it is so much harder than I thought.

—**My Heart is in New York**
Dear My Heart: Of course it's hard to move away from the home you've known and the family you

Annie's Mailbox



cherish. Moving is highly stressful under the best of circumstances. However, you need to give Maryland a chance.

Maryland is not far away from New York. Can you save up mileage so you can visit your daughter perhaps one weekend a month (more often if you can afford it)? Have you joined a church or synagogue where you can become involved in its activities? Does your new apartment, condo or neighborhood have a social committee? These efforts will provide a distraction from your unhappiness and allow you to make new friends. Please hang in there a little longer before giving up.

Dear Annie: I was raised not to make noise when I eat. I don't smack, crunch or chew with my mouth open.

I really some foods make noise, like crackers or cucumbers, but in my group of friends,

there is a woman who crunches the ice in her drink. This is like nails on a blackboard to the rest of us. The subject has been brought to her attention, but she told us in no uncertain terms that she liked to crunch ice and doesn't plan to stop.

We realize this is not an earth-shaking problem, just an annoying one. Now what do we do, other than dissolve the group get-together, which we really don't want to do? Ear plugs?

—**Deafened in South Carolina**
Dear S.C.: Your friend may have an iron deficiency. One of the symptoms is the desire to crunch ice. Really. Tell her you are worried about her doctor and suggest she talk to her doctor. Beyond that, there's not much you can do to dissuade her from crunching. If she is too inconsiderate to stop when asked, you might want to including her in these outings.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Creators Syndicate

Family Circus



12-28
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"Brr! I wouldn't want to live in Celsius!"

GRAFFITI

BEFORE YOU BUY GASTODAY GO FOR AN ESTIMATE

W.A. ...

Dennis the Menace



"Yeah, Mom really loved your gift, but not as much as what she exchanged it for."

The Far Side
© Gary Larson



"Varmints! ... You're all just a bunch of cheatin' varmint!"

Non Sequitur



Swiss defeat Belarus 5-0 in Jr. hockey

The Associated Press

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — Kevin Romy scored twice and Michael Tobler made 19 saves to help Switzerland defeat Belarus 5-0 on Sunday in its opening game of the World Junior Hockey Championship.

Tobler made four difficult saves in the first five minutes as Belarus controlled play, but Switzerland took a 1-0 lead in the first period on Roman Wick's wrap-around goal.

"Getting the lead was very important because they [Belarus] had already played a game and you usually have the most difficulty in your first game," Switzerland coach Jakob Kolliker said. "Our goalie had good positioning and he stayed cool."

In the second period, Romy scored a short-handed goal, and Victor Stancescu and Marco Kasser also scored to give Switzerland a 4-0 lead.

Romy's second goal was the only score of the third period.

Stjepan Goryachevskiy made 32 saves for Belarus (0-2).

"We would never think that we could have such a bad game," Belarus assistant coach Aliaxei Shehebaniou said.

Switzerland plays the United States (1-0) on Monday.

Linus Persson and Johannes Salomonson scored two goals each as Sweden opened the tournament with a 6-0 win over Germany in Thief River Falls, Minn.

Carl Soderberg and Elias Granat also scored, and Christopher Heino-Lindberg made 25 saves for Sweden. Thomas Greiss made 31 saves for Germany (0-2).

Beltran, Steinbrenner have a chat

The Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Carlos Beltran was impressed by George Steinbrenner after meeting with the New York Yankees owner earlier in the week, and told a newspaper in Puerto Rico that he would not be intimidated by playing in New York.

The free-agent All-Star center fielder who led the Houston Astros within one victory of their first World Series berth, talked with Steinbrenner in Tampa, Fla., on Tuesday.

"The meeting with Steinbrenner was a very good," Beltran said in a story published in Friday's edition of *Primera Hora* newspaper.

"He is a professional person, super-educated. I've let them know my interest, and they have interest, too, about me joining their team."

The Yankees — and Astros — clearly will have some competition in the race for the prized outfielder. Beltran said the New York Mets, Detroit Tigers and Chicago Cubs have also shown interest.

"The Mets have been very aggressive," he said. "So far, they haven't made any offers. I think we'll have a meeting very soon to talk personally."

No meeting with the Mets is scheduled, but one will probably take place the week of Jan. 3.

Beltran thinks he would be prepared to play in a high-profile baseball environment, such as New York.

"In all the places, when you do something good, the people applaud you. When you do something bad, they boo you," he said.



Sidney Ponson

"That happens in all the big league parks."

The All-Star outfielder batted .417 in the NL championship series for the Astros with four home runs, five RBIs and four stolen bases after hitting .455 with four homers and nine RBIs in the division series. If Houston doesn't reach an agreement by Jan. 8, the Astros would be ineligible to re-sign him until May 1.

Oriones' Ponson detained

ORANJESTAD, Aruba — Baltimore pitcher Sidney Ponson has been detained on suspicion of assaulting a judge at a beach on Christmas, police said Sunday.

Ponson, who was born in Aruba, was expected to be arranged Monday on assault and battery charges, police spokesman Edwin Comencencia said.

Ponson's lawyer, Chris Lejeuz, didn't return calls seeking comment.

On Saturday at a beach in Boca Catalina, several people confronted Ponson, accusing him of harassing them with his personal watercraft and operating it recklessly, police said.

The 28-year-old right-hander allegedly struck one of the men in the group several times, police said. The man was later identified as a judge, Comencencia said.

The judge was hospitalized but his condition was not known, authorities said. Ponson left the scene but police detained him late Saturday, police said. He was being held at a jail in the community of San Nicolas.

Ponson went 11-15 with a 5.30 ERA in 33 starts last season. He has a 69-80 career record in seven seasons with a 4.67 ERA and 802 strikeouts.

In 2003, he was decorated in his homeland as a Knight in the Order of the Dutch Royal House.

Millwood, Tribe near deal?

CLEVELAND — Free agent right-hander Kevin Millwood is working toward agreement on a one-year contract with the Cleveland Indians, baseball sources told the Associated Press on Sunday night.

Millwood was to arrive in Cleveland on Monday for a physical, the sources said on condition of anonymity.

There were still several details to work through before a contract can be finalized. "This is still a 50-50 proposition, at best," one of the sources said.

The sides are still negotiating the eventual structure of the contract, which is believed to be around \$7 million.

Millwood, 30, went 9-6 with a 4.86 ERA in 25 starts for Philadelphia last season. However, he

made only two starts in September after spraining a ligament and tendon in his pitching elbow. Many analysts appear to be the main reason why teams have not pursued the eight-year veteran more aggressively this winter.

Peretz, Mets to meet

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic — Free-agent pitcher Odalis Perez will meet with New York Mets general manager Omar Minaya later this week, the lefty said Monday.

Perez said they'll get together here Tuesday or Wednesday.

"My agent, Fernando Caza, informed me that Minaya is coming to the Dominican Republic to talk to me personally. After that conversation, I will have a more clear picture about my immediate future in the major leagues," Perez told The Associated Press.

Perez, 27, was 7-6 with a 3.25 ERA in 31 starts for Los Angeles last season. He is 43-43 with a 4.00 ERA in six seasons with the Atlanta Braves and Los Angeles.

Ex-Blue Jay Ault dies at 54

TORONTO — Doug Ault, who hit two home runs in the first game in Toronto Blue Jays history in 1977, has died at 54.

He died at his home in Toronto Springs, Fla., a few miles from the Blue Jays' spring training quarters in Duncedin, the team said Monday. The club provided no further details about the death.

With a snow storm in Toronto and a cold wind blowing off Lake Ontario, Ault homered twice off Chicago's Ken Brett in the Blue Jays' 9-4 victory over the White Sox on April 7, 1977.

Ault, a first baseman, hit 17 homers during his four years in the majors. His career average was .236 in 256 games.

Texas plans to boost Brown's salary

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — With Texas preparing for its first Rose Bowl appearance, university officials are working up a new contract with a raise for coach Mack Brown.

"We like what we've got," Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds told the Associated Press on Monday. "He's done a wonderful job with the program."

Dodds said details would be announced later in the week but Brown would get a raise on a salary that currently pays him slightly more than \$2 million per year. He is one of the highest-paid coaches in college football. Brown's assistants also could get raises.

Texas (10-1) has won at least 10 games each of the last five seasons.

Armstrong chosen AP Male Athlete of the Year

AUSTIN, Texas — Already recognized as one of the truly inspiring athletes of his generation for his comeback against cancer, Lance Armstrong took his cycling legacy a step further when he won a record-breaking sixth consecutive Tour de France in July.

Sports briefs

And for his accomplishment, he was selected Monday as The Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year for the third straight year.

Armstrong and Michael Jordan (1991-93) are the only athletes selected by sports writers and broadcasters three straight times since the honor was first awarded in 1931.

Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning was second in the voting.

Miller, Rahves 2-3

BORMIO, Italy — Overall World Cup leader Bode Miller and U.S. teammate Daron Rahves finished second and third Monday during downhill training camp a course that will host the world championships.

Olympic gold medalist Fritz Strobl of Austria was fastest in the first training session for Wednesday's World Cup race. He covered the 1.8-mile Stelvio layout, which was softened by recent heavy rain, in 53.42 seconds. Miller was 1.19 seconds behind and Rahves was 1.23 back.

Miller holds an 858-546 points lead on Austria's Benjamin Raich in the overall standings. Raich also leads the downhill rankings and is aiming for his third downhill victory this season. Austria's Hermann Maier, third overall, was 21st Monday and Raich was 16th.

The worlds will be held at Bormio — and nearby Santa Caterina for the women's events — from Jan. 28 to Feb. 13.

Ex-Pats TE Coates hired

SALISBURY, N.C. — Ben Coates, a Pro Bowl tight end with the New England Patriots, has been hired as a football coach at his alma mater, tiny Livingston College in North Carolina.

Coates played in two Super Bowls in his NFL career — losing with the Patriots in 1996 and winning with Baltimore in 2001.

He succeeds George Johnson Jr., who went 8-22 in three seasons in his NFL career. In 2000, Coates had been an assistant at Livingstone, a historically black college in Salisbury, N.C., since 2001.

Coates had coaching internships with the Dallas Cowboys and the Frankfurt Galaxy of NFL Europe.

Ibis Tek



The Ibis Tek Ram Bumper attached to the front of the vehicle enables the HMMWV to easily push objects in its path without any damage being done to the front end. Without the Ram Bumper existing vehicle parts are easily damaged sometimes destroying the cooling components of the vehicle. With the Ram Bumper attached to the vehicle the HMMWV can easily push a "mud" through barriers or other vehicles making it put in front of the HMMWV.

The Ram Bumper attaches in a matter of minutes without any special tools and provides the protection you require for your mission. Cutout in front provides mounting for the front winch if desired.

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Nash has done-light assists, but not straight win

Suns guard breaks Magic Johnson's record set in 1986-87 season

The Associated Press

PHOENIX — Steve Nash is fitting in perfectly with his new Phoenix teammates.

Nash became the first NBA player to assist on 10 or more baskets in 11 consecutive victories, finishing with 13 in the Suns' 106-94 victory over Toronto on Sunday night. Nash broke the mark of 10 games, set twice by Magic Johnson in the 1986-87 season.

"It is kind of embarrassing in a way," said Nash, who scored 18 points. "He's one of the greatest players ever to play the game, and to be mentioned with him is a big thrill and honor. But in no stretch am I Magic."

Nash, who left Dallas during the offseason to sign with the Suns, had three assists and Amaré Stoudemire scored six of his 33 points during a 12-0 fourth-quarter run after the Raptors had erased a 20-point lead.

"We kind of took it easy for a couple of minutes," Stoudemire said. "We can't do that. But we were able to close it out."

The Suns have won two of their last 21 games to improve to 24-3.

After falling behind 59-39 early in the third, Toronto fought back with some help from its reserves. Jalen Rose, Lamond Murray and Matt Bonner had key baskets to help the Raptors tie it 80-80 with 8:38 left.

"We always play hard when we get down 20," Toronto coach Sam Mitchell said. "You can't keep getting down 20. We have to play better, we have to get better, we have to be better. For whatever reason, we get down 20, our pride is challenged and we play hard."

During the Suns' latest winning streak—their ninth in a row earlier this season—they have scored at least 100 points in

NBA roundup

every game, with Sunday's 106 points their lowest total during the streak. The last time Phoenix won 11 straight was March 20-April 10, 1997. The 11 consecutive victories ties Miami for the longest streak since the season.

Warriors 98, Kings 94: At Sacramento, Calif., Jason Richardson scored all 26 of his points in the second half to lead Golden State past Sacramento.

The Warriors snapped an 11-game losing streak in Sacramento and won for the second time in 22 games there, dating back to April 9, 1998.

Troy Murphy had 19 points and 13 rebounds for the Warriors, who had lost four of five games and are 3-10 on the road this season.

Cliff Robinson added 11 points and Speedy Claxton had 10 points and nine assists.

Chris Webber scored 28 points for Sacramento, which experienced a horrible home stand by its standards, finishing 2-3. Peja Stojakovic had 18 points, Mike Bibb 14 and Doug Christie and Maurice Evans 13 each.

The Kings scored seven straight points in the fourth quarter to tie a 10-point deficit to 91-88, but Richardson responded with a long jumper and two free throws, putting Golden State ahead 95-89 with 22 seconds left.

Webber made two three-pointers in the final minute, the second one pulling the Kings within 97-94 with 8.1 seconds left. Richardson followed with a free throw with 7.1 seconds left and the Kings missed a three-point shot as time expired.

Cavaliers 100, Hornets 91: At Cleveland, LeBron James had 22 points, 14 as-

sists and nine rebounds for the Cavaliers. Drew Gooden had 18 points and 18 rebounds and Jeff McInnis added 16 points and 10 assists to help Cleveland improve to 11-2 at home.

Lee Nelson scored 18 points for New Orleans.

Spurs 107, Celtics 90: At San Antonio, Tracy Parker scored 22 points, including 17 points and Tim Duncan had 14 points and 11 rebounds for the Spurs.

Ricky Davis led Boston with 21 points on 10-of-20 shooting.

Mavericks 102, Nuggets 88: At Denver, Dirk Nowitzki scored 23 of his 36 points in the second half to help Dallas rally past Denver.

Denver was without leading scorer Carmelo Anthony for the fourth straight game because of a sprained ankle. Andre Miller led the Nuggets with 18 points.

New York, Bobcats 82: At New York, Tim Thomas scored 20 points to lead five New York starters in double figures. Emeka Okafor had 23 points and 15 rebounds for the Bobcats for his 15th straight double-double.

Rockets 96, Clippers 79: At Houston, Tracy McGrady and Jim Jackson each scored 21 points to help Houston win for the seventh time in 10 games.

Yao Ming had 20 points and 11 rebounds for his third straight double-double and team-high 11th of the season. Corey Magette scored 23 points for the Clippers.

Timberwolves 109, Wizards 74: At Minneapolis, Wally Szczerbiak scored 23 points to lead Minnesota's 10th straight win at the arena. Scottie Pippen scored 21 points for Washington.

Bucks 99, Bulls 92: At Milwaukee, Michael Redd scored 20 of his season-high 39 points in the first quarter and the Bucks snapped a four-game losing streak. Ben Gordon had 19 points for Chicago.



Phoenix Suns guard Steve Nash, right, brings the ball up the floor as he is guarded by Toronto Raptors' Lamond Murray in the second quarter Sunday in Phoenix. Nash had 13 assists, breaking Magic Johnson's record with 10 or more in 11 straight victories. The Suns won 106-94.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	13	10	56.8	
Boston	12	14	46.2	1½
Philadelphia	11	15	42.3	2
New Jersey	10	16	38.4	4
Orlando	10	16	38.4	4
Charlotte	7	20	30.2	12
Atlanta	2	26	7.3	26

Southeast Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	10	17	36.9	
Orlando	10	16	38.5	
Washington	11	15	42.3	
Charlotte	7	20	30.2	
Atlanta	2	26	7.3	

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Cleveland	16	11	59.3	—
Detroit	12	15	44.1	4
Indiana	12	16	42.3	4
Chicago	12	16	42.3	4
Milwaukee	12	17	41.2	5

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	22	6	78.6	—
Dallas	18	10	64.3	4
Houston	12	16	42.3	10
Memphis	12	14	46.2	10
Portland	12	17	41.2	11

Northwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Seattle	16	7	79.2	—
Minnesota	16	10	61.5	4
Denver	13	14	48.1	7
Utah	11	16	40.7	9½

Pacific Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Phoenix	18	6	85.7	—
Sacramento	17	6	84.6	—
L.A. Lakers	14	12	53.8	9
Golden State	10	18	35.3	15

Monday's games				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York at Orlando	13	10	56.8	
Charlotte at Washington	7	20	30.2	
New Orleans at Indiana	11	15	42.3	
Atlanta at Detroit	2	26	7.3	

Atlantic Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	13	10	56.8	
Boston	12	14	46.2	1½
Philadelphia	11	15	42.3	2
New Jersey	10	16	38.4	4
Orlando	10	16	38.4	4
Charlotte	7	20	30.2	12
Atlanta	2	26	7.3	26

Southeast Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	10	17	36.9	
Orlando	10	16	38.5	
Washington	11	15	42.3	
Charlotte	7	20	30.2	
Atlanta	2	26	7.3	

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Cleveland	16	11	59.3	—
Detroit	12	15	44.1	4
Indiana	12	16	42.3	4
Chicago	12	16	42.3	4
Milwaukee	12	17	41.2	5

Southwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	22	6	78.6	—
Dallas	18	10	64.3	4
Houston	12	16	42.3	10
Memphis	12	14	46.2	10
Portland	12	17	41.2	11

Northwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Seattle	16	7	79.2	—
Minnesota	16	10	61.5	4
Denver	13	14	48.1	7
Utah	11	16	40.7	9½

Pacific Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Phoenix	18	6	85.7	—
Sacramento	17	6	84.6	—
L.A. Lakers	14	12	53.8	9
Golden State	10	18	35.3	15

Monday's games				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York at Orlando	13	10	56.8	
Charlotte at Washington	7	20	30.2	
New Orleans at Indiana	11	15	42.3	
Atlanta at Detroit	2	26	7.3	

Atlantic Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	13	10	56.8	
Boston	12	14	46.2	1½
Philadelphia	11	15	42.3	2
New Jersey	10	16	38.4	4
Orlando	10	16	38.4	4
Charlotte	7	20	30.2	12
Atlanta	2	26	7.3	26

Southeast Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	10	17	36.9	
Orlando	10	16	38.5	
Washington	11	15	42.3	
Charlotte	7	20	30.2	
Atlanta	2	26	7.3	

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Cleveland	16	11	59.3	—
Detroit	12	15	44.1	4
Indiana	12	16	42.3	4
Chicago	12	16	42.3	4
Milwaukee	12	17	41.2	5

Southwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	22	6	78.6	—
Dallas	18	10	64.3	4
Houston	12	16	42.3	10
Memphis	12	14	46.2	10
Portland	12	17	41.2	11

Northwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Seattle	16	7	79.2	—
Minnesota	16	10	61.5	4
Denver	13	14	48.1	7
Utah	11	16	40.7	9½

Pacific Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Phoenix	18	6	85.7	—
Sacramento	17	6	84.6	—
L.A. Lakers	14	12	53.8	9
Golden State	10	18	35.3	15

Monday's games				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York at Orlando	13	10	56.8	
Charlotte at Washington	7	20	30.2	
New Orleans at Indiana	11	15	42.3	
Atlanta at Detroit	2	26	7.3	

Atlantic Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	13	10	56.8	
Boston	12	14	46.2	1½
Philadelphia	11	15	42.3	2
New Jersey	10	16	38.4	4
Orlando	10	16	38.4	4
Charlotte	7	20	30.2	12
Atlanta	2	26	7.3	26

Southeast Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	10	17	36.9	
Orlando	10	16	38.5	
Washington	11	15	42.3	
Charlotte	7	20	30.2	
Atlanta	2	26	7.3	

Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Cleveland	16	11	59.3	—
Detroit	12	15	44.1	4
Indiana	12	16	42.3	4
Chicago	12	16	42.3	4
Milwaukee	12	17	41.2	5

Southwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	22	6	78.6	—
Dallas	18	10	64.3	4
Houston	12	16	42.3	10
Memphis	12	14	46.2	10
Portland	12	17	41.2	11

Northwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Seattle	16	7	79.2	—
Minnesota	16	10	61.5	4
Denver	13	14	48.1	7
Utah	11	16	40.7	9½

Pacific Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Phoenix	18	6	85.7	—
Sacramento	17	6	84.6	—
L.A. Lakers	14	12	53.8	9
Golden State	10	18	35.3	15

Monday's games				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York at Orlando	13	10	56.8	
Charlotte at Washington	7	20	30.2	
New Orleans at Indiana	11	15	42.3	
Atlanta at Detroit	2	26	7.3	

Atlantic Division			
W	L	Pct	GB
New York	13	10	

Focused Patriots pummel N.Y. Jets

BY BARRY WILNER
The Associated Press

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — The New York Jets just don't measure up. Of course, not many teams do when they try using the New England Patriots as their proving ground.

With the Jets seeking a victory that would certify them as a Super Bowl contender and, not incidentally, clinch a wild-card playoff berth, it was the Patriots who showed their championship qualities. New England dominated New York 23-7 Sunday, securing a first-round bye and showing the Jets (10-5) how far they are from the elite level of the NFL.

That's a level the Patriots (13-2) have been on for most of the last four seasons. They simply know how to win the biggest games.

"We were coming off a tough loss," Tom Brady said of a last-minute upset defeat at Miami in which he threw four interceptions. "It was a short week and

the team was really intent on going out and playing our best.

"This is a team with a lot of mental toughness that battles and has a lot of strong character, and when you have that, you can feel proud at the end of the day."

They also can feel relieved, because the Patriots are settled in as the No. 2 seed in the AFC behind Pittsburgh. Not only is next week's game against San Francisco meaningless, but there will be a week off after that. New England has a banged-up secondary and star defensive end Richard Seymour injured his foot Sunday.

"A point of emphasis this week was getting a win and getting a bye," said safety Eugene Wilson, who had an interception.

The Jets wish they had such a luxury. After the Patriots befuddled Chad Pennington into yet another mediocre effort in a critical game, New York must win at St. Louis in the season-ender to ensure it will be in the playoffs.

Since starting 5-0, the Jets are 5-5. All five of the Jets' defeats this year have been against teams with winning records: two to the Patriots and one each against Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Buffalo.

That's why the Jets accentuated the significance of a victory over the division-rival Pats — a win they never came close to getting.

"It's shocking because you have the feeling you're going to do a lot more," said wide receiver Santana Moss, who scored New York's touchdown on a 15-yard pass with 9:32 remaining. "You



New England Patriots defensive back Eugene Wilson (26) intercepts a pass intended for New York Jets wide receiver Wayne Chrebet.

know what you can do and you go in confident. That's the disappointment that you have as a player when you know what you could have done, but you didn't do it."

There were many reasons the Jets couldn't do it, especially linebackers Tedy Bruschi (eight tackles, one interception) and Ted Johnson and strong safety Rodney Harrison, who held the league's leading rusher, Curtis Martin, to a season-low 33 yards.

Plus Brady (21-for-32 for 264 yards and two touchdowns), wide receiver Deion Branch (seven catches for 82 yards and a TD) and Corey Dillon, who rushed for 89 yards.

"We have guys all over the field who are capable of getting open and making plays," Brady said. "I'll take 23 points — and them with less than 23."

How about seven? Pennington, who started a firstrest last week when he berated reporters for suggesting that he flops in big games, struggled again. He threw two interceptions and lost a fumble while constantly overthrowing or underthrowing receivers.

He did it against an injury-ravaged secondary, too.

"You could see frustration set in," Harrison said. "They were looking at our DBs and saying, 'These are a bunch of replacements and we can't get it done.'"

Ball bounces Lions' way against Bears

BY LARRY LAGE
The Associated Press

DETROIT — Andre Goodman didn't like Detroit's chances when a play he defended in the end zone was reviewed.

"You saw the replay," Goodman said. "You would be nervous, too."

Luckily for the Lions, the call and review went their way.

Chad Hutchinson appeared to throw a 43-yard, tying touchdown pass to Bernard Berrian with 1:26 left, but an incomplete ruling on the field stood after a review — despite replays that appeared to show it should have been overturned — giving Detroit a 19-13 victory over the Chicago Bears on Sunday.

Referee Terry McAulay announced the ball was moving when Berrian hit the ground.

"I didn't see him bounce it," said Goodman, who draped Berrian. "I actually thought he caught it fair. I thought he had it, and had it the whole time."

Berrian did, too. "I caught the ball, got two feet in, hit the ground and that was it," Berrian said. "It was a touchdown. There's no doubt about it."

The Lions got a fortunate break a week after a botched extra point with 8 seconds left allowed Minnesota to tie the game 28-27.

Despite winning one more game than they did last year, the Lions (6-9) were subdued after nearly blowing a 16-0 lead late in the third quarter.

"When you play as poorly as we did in the second half, it just doesn't leave you with a great feeling," said Joey Harrington, who was 15-for-30 for 166 yards with an interception.

Hutchinson was 20-for-35 for 114 yards with a TD and Thomas Jones ran for 109 yards for the Bears (5-10), who have dropped five of six.

Kevin Jones went over the 1,000-yard mark, something only Barry Sanders and Billy Sims did as Detroit rookies, with 123 yards on 25 carries.

Bills move step closer to playoffs

BY GREG BEACHAM
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — The Buffalo Bills weren't sure whether it was McGahee could play until the moment he ran onto the field for their first huddle.

And that was about the extent of the suspense in the Bills' 41-7 victory on Sunday. Buffalo's injured knee held up, the Buffalo defense throttled San Francisco's offense and the Bills boosted their playoff chances by handing the Niners their worst home loss since 1967.

"You might want to feel sorry for them, but in this business, you can't," Buffalo safety Lawyer Milloy said.

Coach Mike Mularkey still won't say the word "playoffs," but with their sixth straight victory, his Bills (9-6) certainly are showing the determination and desperation necessary to become just the second team in NFL history to reach the postseason after starting 0-4.

"It's just another example of good team football," said Drew Bledsoe, who went 21-for-32 for 172 yards and a touchdown. "We had good special teams play, our defense shut them down, and offensively, it took us a quarter to get going, but we put up a bunch of points."

"It's good team football, and it's fun to be a part of."

Mularkey shut off every television in the locker room before the game, ordering the Bills to focus on the only game with playoff implications they could control. Though nothing was decided, the other games went exceptionally well for the Bills: Fellow contenders Baltimore, Jacksonville and the New York Jets all lost.

"Some of us know the situations, but the only thing we could control is what was right here," linebacker Takeo Spikes said. "We knew the problems [the 49ers] were having, and we wanted to beat them with our best game."

McGahee rushed for 102 yards and two touchdowns despite missing practice earlier in the week, and Lee Evans caught eight passes for 92 yards and two more scores as the Bills extended their longest winning streak since 1990. Buffalo also clinched its first winning record since 1999.

From Spikes' menacing tackles to Evans' impressive catches, the Bills looked much better this season. Using a no-huddle offense and playing suffocating defense, they jumped to a 17-0 halftime lead and then they poured it on, forcing four turnovers and scoring almost at will.

The Bills also will be in contention for the playoffs with a rest McGahee and Bledsoe in anticipation of next week's big game against Pittsburgh. Backup quarterback Shane Matthews played most of the second half, and Shaud Williams ran for 93 yards and a touchdown.

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Giants at a loss after streak grows to eight

By JOE KAY
The Associated Press

CINCINNATI — Something's not right with the New York Giants.

Maybe it's the chemistry. Maybe it's the coaching. Maybe it's the rookie quarterback's growing pains.

Or, maybe it's a little bit of all three, coupled with some plain old bad luck.

The Giants walked off the field numbed by the cold and their eighth straight loss Sunday, one that was the most improbable of all in a dismal season. Jon Kitna's 4-yard touchdown pass to Chad Johnson with 44 seconds left gave the Cincinnati Bengals a 23-22 victory over a team that's at a loss to explain itself.

"We've got to get some things solved in the locker room," cornerback Will Peterson said. "There has to be a problem, if we keep losing close games like this. There's got to be something about the mentality and the attitude, something intangibles."

The Giants (5-10) haven't won since Oct. 31, a slide that has something to do with the switch to rookie Eli Manning at quarterback. The first overall pick in the draft struggled in his first four starts, but has started getting it together in the last two.

He had the best game of his career in a 33-30 loss to Pittsburgh, then avoided the game-turning mistake until his final pass against the Bengals.

Needing to go about 20 yards to get in range for a field-goal attempt by Steve Christie, Manning tried to thread a pass to tight end Jeremy Shockey.

Robert Geathers got his hand on the ball and deflected it to fellow lineman Carl Powell for the clinching interception.

"There's no way you can blame anyone on that," said Manning, who was 19-for-37 for a career-high 201 yards. "It's just that they're having his hand in the right spot."

In the last two minutes, the Bengals (7-8) had everything go their way.

New York led 22-17 after Christie's fifth field goal with 5:15 remaining. The Giants got the ball back with a chance to drain the clock, but managed only one first down and had to punt.

Keivan Ratliff had a lot of room, and ran it back 42 yards to the Giants' 24-yard line. The play turned the momentum.

"I just looked at them once and knew I was going to have some room after I made the catch," Ratliff said.

Jon Kitna had another up-and-down day filling in for the injured Carson Palmer. After Ratliff's return, Kitna missed badly on his first three passes, leaving the Bengals in a 4th-and-10. Seeing no one open, he lobbed a pass for T.J. Houshmandzadeh to go up and get.

The receiver outmanned two defenders and held on at the 5-yard line. One play later, Kitna put the Bengals ahead with his second touchdown pass to Johnson.

"That is one of the most bizarre games I've ever seen in my life," coach Tom Coughlin said. "I have no explanation for why, after after play after play with opportunities, we can't make a play."

Steelers clinch home field

By ALAN ROBINSON
The Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Tommy Maddox could start the Pittsburgh Steelers' first and last regular-season games. What Ben Roethlisberger did in between guarantees they won't leave home during the AFC playoffs as long as they keep winning.

Roethlisberger didn't play a full game for the first time since becoming a starter, but threw two touchdown passes in a 20-7 victory Sunday over Baltimore that left the Steelers on the brink of the best regular season in franchise history.

Roethlisberger was pulled for precautionary reasons with an unspecified rib injury early in the fourth quarter, not long after Terrell Suggs slammed him to the turf during a 2-yard touchdown pass to Jerome Tuman.

The injury didn't appear serious — Roethlisberger completed two passes on Pittsburgh's next possession before Maddox took over.

Because the Steelers (14-1) won't play another meaningful game for three weeks, it seems unlikely they would risk playing Roethlisberger on Sunday in Buffalo (9-6).

His teammates are certain he will be ready for their first playoff game Jan. 15 or 16.

"Ben is a tough guy," Jerome Bettis said. "I am not worried about the guy. He wanted to keep going — I really think they stepped him from going on. He's a competitor."

What the Steelers find remarkable is they secured home-field advantage before Week 17, one of the most competitive AFC seasons ever. No rookie quarterback has taken his team to the



Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger (7) gets off a pass under pressure from Baltimore Ravens' Terrell Suggs (55) on Sunday.

Super Bowl, yet it wouldn't surprise the Steelers if Roethlisberger — 13-0 as an NFL starter — does exactly that.

"He's just a lot more comfortable," offensive coordinator Ken Whisenand said after Roethlisberger went 14-for-19 for 221 yards and one interception. "The timing of his throws is much better, and that only helps the running game."

The Ravens (8-7), their own playoff hopes all but gone, never did figure out what the Steelers were doing.

"It's tough, it really is," said quarterback Kyle Boller, who drove the Ravens to the Steelers 35 three times without coming away with any points. "It's losing."

Roethlisberger was 3-for-3 as the Steelers needed only five plays to drive 80 yards on an opening possession finished off by his 36-yard touchdown pass to Plexo Burgess, who was coming off a four-game injury layoff.

But Roethlisberger threw only twice during a 14-play, 71-yard drive to open the second half, with Jerome Bettis and Verron Hayes combining for 12 consecutive runs ahead of the rookie's scoring pass to Tuman that made it 17-7. Bettis gained 117 yards in his sixth 100-yard game in six starts for the injured Duce Staley (hamstring).

Suggs was penalized for roughing Roethlisberger but, despite the acrimony that often exists between the two AFC North rivals, there were no incidents the rest of the game. Maybe it's because the Steelers were in such control they didn't want to risk motivating an opponent that seemed worn down and beaten following the 8½-minute drive.

The Ravens talked of taking a playoff-like intensity into the game, but it didn't show up.

"You've got to respond better than all of those circumstances," coach Brian Billicek said.

Texans cripple Jags' playoff hopes

By MARK LONG
The Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The Jacksonville Jaguars spent the week talking about their huge win in Green Bay getting to the playoffs and needing some help from Pittsburgh against Baltimore.

Maybe they should have focused more on Houston.

Domanick Davis ran for a career-high 150 yards and a touchdown and the Texans crippled Jacksonville's postseason hopes with a 21-0 victory Sunday.

Several Houston players said they felt slighted by a lack of attention from the Jags, and it gave a team with little to play for a reason to rally.

"They're sitting there worried about Baltimore and Pittsburgh. They should have been worried a little bit about us," Texans defensive end Gary Walker said.

The Jaguars looked nothing like a team with so much to play for in the final after upsetting the Packers and pulling even with Baltimore, Denver and Buffalo in the AFC wild-card race.

Jacksonville had some excuse, though. Running back Fred Taylor missed the game with a sprained left knee, ending his streak of consecutive starts at 24 games, and quarterback Byron Leftwich sustained a mild concussion in the first quarter.

The shutout was the first in team history for Houston and marked the first time the Jaguars have been blanked since a 44-0 drubbing at Detroit on Dec. 17, 1995.

Because Baltimore lost at Pittsburgh, the Jaguars (8-7) could have taken control of the final AFC wild-card spot with a victory against Houston (7-8). Instead, they will need to win next week at Oakland and have the Ravens, Broncos and Bill to return to the postseason for the first time since 1999.

"I knew we had a good chance coming in here, but for some reason these guys don't respect us and they came out and played like it," Texans defensive tackle Seth Payne said after Houston held the Jaguars to a franchise-low 126 yards.

The Jags have no one to blame but themselves — because they did little on offense and couldn't stop Davis all afternoon.

"We just didn't show up," Pro Bowl defensive tackle Marcus Stroud said. "But maybe we can still take it to the playoffs."

Leftwich struggled from the start. He misfired on his first three passes and fumbled early. He picked up the loose ball and then took a shot to the head when sacked by Robaire Smith.

He missed a play before returning on the next series. But he wasn't the same. He overthrew receivers and looked lost in the pocket at times. Coach Jack Del Rio benched him with 4:04 to play, replacing him with David Garrard.

Leftwich finished 6-for-14 for 35 yards with an interception.

The Texans, meanwhile, moved the ball with ease. They finished with 333 yards, much of it thanks to Davis. His previous career high was 129 yards, set last season against the New York Jets and tied last month against Tennessee.

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White was one of NFL's greatest

BY CLIFF CHRISTL

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

There is no higher honor in professional football than induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. But there has been a small pantheon of players in the 85-year history of the NFL that has transcended even that special company.

Reggie White was among them. He was one of the great of the great.

White, who died Sunday at age 43, played 15 years in the NFL, including six with the Green Bay Packers, and finished his career with 198 sacks, now second on the career list. He was elected to a record 13 straight Pro Bowls. He was twice the NFL's defensive player of the year.

He was selected to the NFL's all-decade teams for the 1980s and 1990s. And he was one of three defensive ends named to the league's 75th anniversary team in 1994, six years before he retired.

White is all but a cliché to be inducted into the Hall of Fame when he becomes eligible a year from now, if not before if the selection committee decides to waive its five-year waiting period.

The other defensive ends honored with White on the 75th anniversary team were David "Deacon" Jones and Gino Marchetti.

Willie Davis, one of 12 defensive ends in the Hall of Fame, played during the same period as Jones and Marchetti. As one of the great Packers of the Vince Lombardi era and a current member of the franchise's board of directors, Davis also closely followed White's career.

Davis categorized Jones and Marchetti as great pass rushers. To this day, Davis said Marchetti was the best he had ever seen at that aspect of the game. But Davis said he probably would rank White as the most complete defensive end of them all.

"Reggie could very well have been that one player," said Davis.

"His ability to play end with almost tackle skills and, ultimately, getting outside and playing as a typical defensive end would play it today; when you take those two things and hook them together, Reggie could very well be the guy."

Jones and Marchetti played before sacks were kept as an unofficial statistic. When White retired following the 2000 season, he held the record. Bruce Smith broke it last year, finishing his career with 200.

Smith played four more years than White. Jones, who played 14 seasons mostly with the Los Angeles Rams, said he'd rank himself No. 1, but that White might be next on his list.

"There are two ends on every team," said Jones. "We were the No. 1 and No. 2 choices on the all-time team. But I would never say anybody who ever played the position was better than me. You could hold me to a fire and I'd never say that."

After two seasons with the Memphis Showboats of the United States Football League, White signed with the Philadelphia Eagles on Sept. 20, 1985. He played in only 13 games that season but had an instant impact. He registered 13 sacks and was named the NFC's defensive rookie of the year.

In eight seasons with the Eagles, White totaled 124 sacks, an average of 15%. In the strike-shortened 1987 season, he recorded a league-high 21 sacks.

White played with the Packers from 1993-'98. He added

76½ sacks to his total and was the cornerstone of a defense that ranked No. 1 in the league when the Packers won Super Bowl XXXI.

White finished his career with the Carolina Panthers in 2000.

Jim Hanifan, offensive line coach of the St. Louis Rams, is in his 31st season in the NFL. Included was a stint as line coach of the Washington Redskins famed "Hogs," when White was playing for division rival Philadelphia.

No defensive end ever caused him more fits than White, Hanifan said.

"He was absolutely awesome," he said, "not only when he played defensive end, but when he was with Buddy [Ryan] and the Eagles, they'd line up with him over center. My gosh! We did everything we could think of to minimize the havoc he would cause. But he created that anyway. He could not only come off the edge with speed. But, oh my goodness, he came off with power."

In comparing White to other defensive ends over the past three decades, Hanifan made the same distinction as Davis when he compared White to the players of yester-

year. What separated White from the others was his ability to play the run and the pass.

"He was a very similar threat as Lawrence Taylor was at linebacker," Hanifan said. "The other guy I would put up in that top three would be Bruce Smith. But Bruce was going to go after that quarterback and you could run the ball there, at times. Reggie was solid, all the way around."

A case could even be made that White was more than just a great defensive end. Along with Taylor, he might also be on a short list of the greatest defensive players of the modern era.

"I'm going to use that Bum Phillips' line: I don't know if he's the best, but it wouldn't take time to call the roll," said Ron Wolf, who as general manager of the Packers brought White to Green Bay. "You're talking about defensive greats who ever played the game. He's right up there."

"Deion Sanders revolutionized the game. Ted Hendricks. They were great players. But [White] would be in that group."

Against the run, White not only possessed the strength and leverage to hold the point of attack, but he also had the instincts and quickness to squeeze gaps, and the speed to chase plays down from the backside.

His signature as a pass rusher was a combination of what they call in the business club, rip or hump moves. Essentially, White would charge up-field, catch the tackle shifting his weight, and sweep him aside if not completely knock him off his feet.

"He was tremendous. He had great strength. He had great speed," said Dale Haupt, a native of Manitowoc who served as White's defensive line coach for seven of his eight seasons in Philadelphia. "He'd set them up with [the club], fake with it, almost like a boxer. But he also could play off that. Fake the club and go back to the rip."

Bob Oates, a writer for the Los Angeles Times and the only charter member remaining on the Hall of Fame selection committee, said that the five-year rule had never been waived in the 41-year history of the voting.

Oates said that he expected someone on the committee to propose in the weeks ahead that an exception be made for White.

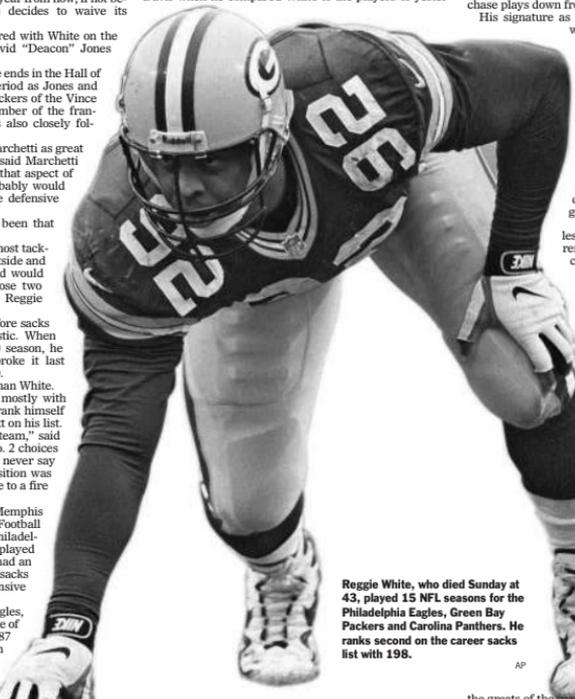
In 1973, voters conducted a special election and named Roberto Clemente to the Baseball Hall of Fame shortly after his death.

Clemente was killed in a plane crash three months after his final season with the Pittsburgh Pirates.

But Oates said he didn't believe a proposal to exempt White from the customary wait would pass.

"It's the first thing that occurs to you," said Oates. "My guess is that it would not stand much of a chance. The rules the Hall of Fame people have put in have withstood many challenges and they've never changed anything."

But Oates said he was certain that White would be elected in February, 2005, at the latest, and take his rightful place among



Reggie White, who died Sunday at 43, played 15 NFL seasons for the Philadelphia Eagles, Green Bay Packers and Carolina Panthers. He ranks second on the career sacks list with 198.

the greats of the game

Football's reaction to Reggie White's death:

"Reggie White was a gentle warrior who will be remembered as one of the greatest defensive players in NFL history. Equally as impressive as his achievements on the field was the positive impact he made off the field. It may be hard to overstate his influence on so many young people." — NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue.

"He was just a wonderful player, first of all. Then, as a person, he was just the best. He was one of the leaders, along with Brett Favre, of our football team in Green Bay. I'm a better person for having been around Reggie White." — Seattle Seahawks coach Mike Holmgren, who coached White at Green Bay.

"He was one of the greatest players who ever put on a uniform at his position. I once referred to him as the Tony Dorese of defensive linemen. There's never been a better one." — Johnny Majors, White's coach at Tennessee.

"Everyone thought the last place he would sign was Green Bay and it was monumental because not only did he sign but he recruited for Green Bay... He sent a message to the rest of the NFL that Green Bay was a great place to play." — Green Bay President Bob Harlan. White was the first major blazer player to sign with the Packers as a free agent.

"At times, you would get a little frustrated with Reggie because he was always goofing around in the practice field. He goofed around all the time. He loved the game and rarely got serious. Now on Sundays, he'd get serious and he would have fun." — Tennessee Titans coach Jeff Fisher, who was with White for five seasons in Philadelphia.

Manning: QB kept cool on game-tying drive

MANNING, FROM BACK PAGE

"We wanted to confuse him a little bit," linebacker Donnie Edwards said.

"But when we had to make plays, we came up short."

The biggest play came on a 2-and-4 from the 21-yard line with the Colts down 31-23 with 2:07 left in regulation. Manning waved off the punt team, then found Reggie Wayne for a game-saving 19-yard completion.

The Chargers were stunned.

"He's the one who told the coach they were going for it," Edwards said. "It was pretty amazing because if we stopped there, we were pretty much win the game."

Before the Chargers could recover, Manning hooked up with Dallas Clark twice, Harrison for 18 yards and the 21-yard line drive to a wide-open Stokley in the end zone — for the record-breaker.

"It was right on me, which is probably a good thing because if I had too much time to think about it, I probably would have dropped it," Stokley said.

But there was no time to dance as cameras flashed in the crowd.

Instead, Manning quickly directed his teammates to the line, and handed off to James for the tying 2-point conversion.

San Diego didn't get another chance. After winning the coin toss to start overtime, Manning connected with Stokley on 23-yard pass, then hit Reggie Wayne for a 35-yard catch and

run. James then ran to the middle of the field to set up Vanderjag's kick.

Besides Manning's record, the Colts became the first team with three receivers each with 1,000 yards and 10 TD receptions. No team has had three 1,000 yard receivers since the 1995 Atlanta Falcons.

San Diego also had record-breaking performances.

Drew Brees' 4-yard shovel pass to Antonio Gates for a 24-9 lead early in the second half, was Gates' 13th TD of the season. That gave Gates the NFL mark for TD receptions by a tight end, breaking a tie with four other players. Brees was 21-for-31 for 290 yards and three touchdowns.

And when LaDainian Tomlinson scored on the first play of the fourth quarter, running 16 yards for a 31-16 lead, it was his 12th straight game with a rushing TD. That broke the single-season record he shared with Dallas' Emmitt Smith and Kansas City's Priest Holmes, Washington's John Riggin and George Rogers both ran for touchdowns in 13 straight games, but they needed two seasons to do it.

"These awards are terrific on both sides," Chargers coach Marty Schottenheimer said. "But the bottom line is we want to win."

So did the Colts, especially Manning.

"It was an individual thing," he said. "But the nice thing is, we kind of turned it into a team thing here."

Preliminary report says White died from lung ailment, other problems

The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NFL great Reggie White may have died because of a respiratory disease combined with other health problems, a preliminary autopsy report said Monday.

White most likely had a condition that affected the amount of air his lungs could hold, resulting in "fatal cardiac arrhythmia," said Dr. Mike Sullivan, the medical examiner for Mecklenburg County and a forensic pathologist.

The report issued by Sullivan's

office also said sleep apnea may have been a factor.

The report is a preliminary one; determining a final cause of death could take up to three months, Sullivan's office said. White died Sunday at Presbyterian Hospital in Huntersville after being taken there from his home in nearby Cornelius. His wife, Sara, called 911.

White had the disease, known as sarcoidosis, for several years, family spokesman Keith Johnson said Sunday. He described it as a respiratory ailment that affected his sleep.

On its Web site, the American Lung Association describes sarcoidosis as a disease characterized by the presence of small areas of inflamed cells that can attack any organ of the body but is most frequently found in the lungs.

The cause of the disease, which is most common among blacks and white northern Europeans, is not known.

Sleep apnea causes people to stop breathing repeatedly — in some cases, hundreds of times — during their sleep.

Panthers get within one win of playoffs after starting 1-7

The Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The Carolina Panthers are one step closer to overcoming their horrendous start.

Jake Delhomme threw for 214 yards and four touchdowns Sunday against the defending NFC champions but the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 37-20 and move within a victory of clinching a playoff berth.

The Panthers (7-8) won for the sixth time in seven games after a 1-7 start, and they can earn a wild-card spot by beating New Orleans at home next Sunday.

The Saints, also 7-8, stayed in the race by beating Atlanta 26-13, a victory that eliminated Tampa Bay from contention earlier in the day.

Four of the six games the Panthers and Bucs have played against each other since the NFC South was formed in 2002 have been decided by seven points or less, including a 21-14 Carolina victory on Nov. 28.

Delhomme threw TD passes of 15 and 6 yards to Muthsin Muhammad and the Panthers blocked a punt to set up a field goal as the first half expired to build a 17-7 lead. Carolina marched 70 yards to get up 24-7 on the second half kickoff to go up 24-7 on Delhomme's 4-yard TD throw to Keary Colbert.

The Bucs (5-10) lost for the third straight time since routing the NFC South champion Falcons

27-0 in a game they hoped would be a springboard for a strong start. Tampa Bay run that would carry them to the playoffs after an 0-4 start.

Instead, Tampa Bay is assured its worst finish since 1996. A loss at Arizona in the season finale would give the Bucs 11 defeats for the first time since 1993.

Seahawks 24, Cardinals 21: At Seattle, Shaun Alexander rushed 30 times for 154 yards with two touchdowns. Darrell Jackson caught six passes for 101 yards as Seattle clinched a playoff berth.

The Seahawks (8-7) will clinch the NFC West if Philadelphia beats St. Louis on Monday night. It's the first time Seattle has made the playoffs in consecutive years since 1983-84.

Josh McCown threw a pair of 29-yard TD strikes to Larry Fitzgerald in the fourth quarter, putting the Cardinals (5-10) to 24-21 with 2:30 to play. He also found receiver Steve Watson for a score with 11:32 remaining.

Cowboys 13, Redskins 10: At Irving, Texas, Vinny Testaverde silenced the boos from fans who wanted him benched with a 39-yard touchdown to Patrick Crayton with 30 seconds left that gave the Dallas its fourth straight victory over Washington and 14th

in 15 games. Dallas (6-9) fell behind 10-6 with 6:44 left on a 5-yard touch-down pass from Patrick Ramsey to Robert Royal.

Dallas took over at its 25 with 1:25 left and threw three straight incompletions, then hit Crayton for 15 yards on fourth-and-10.

Testaverde hit Jason Witten for 14 yards and Richie Anderson for 7 more. Facing third-and-3, he threw deep to Crayton down the right sideline and the seventh-round pick caught it in stride for his first career touchdown. The Redskins are 5-10.

Dolphins 10, Browns 7: At Miami, Olinde Marek kicked a 51-yard field goal with 7 seconds left to win the Dolphins' eighth Cleveland, prompting a big cheer from the 20,000 fans who remained until the finish.

Jim Bates won in the matchup of interim coaches against Terry Robiskie. Bates improved to 3-3 since Dave Wannstedt resigned, but he'll be replaced after the season by LSU coach Nick Saban, who accepted the Miami job Saturday.

The Dolphins (4-11) made it two wins in a row for the first time this season.

Lee Suggs broke Jim Brown's 45-year-old Cleveland franchise record for carries with 38 for 143 yards, but the Browns (3-12) still lost their ninth straight game. Robiskie fell to 0-4 since replacing Butch Davis.

Ibis Tek GSM Cell Phone Jammer Model 735TC Vehicle System



Designed specifically with the intent to prevent the operation of cellular telephones from being used as remote detonator or explosive devices. Since GSM does not use paired off transmit and receive channels the standard sweep frequency jammers are less than 60 percent efficient in preventing a signal from getting through. This unit uses a different waveform to sweep both up and down in frequency in a single cycle and the waveform is repeated several thousand times a second. Additionally the white noise is used to modulate the output waveform with an additional pseudorandom tone that changes frequency 16 times a second and is also swept through the entire bandwidth at several thousand times per second to give the Buzzer modulation that is used in high end military jamming systems.

Features: Disrupts all GSM cellular frequencies 800-960 MHz and 1800-2100 MHz. Mounts on back of front passenger or drivers seat. 100 Meter operational range and connects directly to IEM/WV batteries under seat or in 12V vehicle adapter in other vehicles. Washable No suction mount antenna for non-metallic vehicles and magnetic mount antenna for metallic vehicles and SUV's. Operates continuously when connected to vehicle battery power and does not disrupt operation of military radios and communication devices. Internal Power system are all switching supplies with near 90% efficiency to insure a constant power output as the battery voltage varies. RF output does not vary with battery discharge.

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Sunday's NFL stars:



AP photo

Quarterbacks

► Peyton Manning, Colts, threw his 49th TD pass of the season to beat Dan Fouts of the San Diego Chargers 37-27 for 44 for 383 yards and 2 TDs in the Colts' 21-14 overtime victory over the San Diego Chargers.

Running backs

► Shaun Alexander, Seahawks, rushed 30 times for 154 yards as Seattle clinched a playoff berth with a 24-21 victory over the Arizona Cardinals.

► Donnamark Davis, Texans, rushed for a career-high 150 yards and a touchdown in the Houston Oilers' win over the Jacksonville Jaguars' playoff hopes with a 21-0 victory.

Receivers

► Joey Gallowsay, Buccaneers, had nine receptions for 98 yards and a touchdown in a 37-20 loss to the Carolina Panthers. It

Quarterbacks

was Brandon Stokley TD in the past four games. ► Randall Young, Colts, caught Peyton Manning's record-breaking 49th TD pass, one of his seven receptions for 123 yards and a TD. Stokley's TD also gave the Colts their eighth victory over the San Diego Chargers. Reggie Wayne, with 10 TDs and 1,000 yards since in the game.

► Antonio Gates, Chargers, caught his 33rd career touchdown pass in the Chargers' 30-31 loss to the San Diego Chargers.

Defense

► The Houston Oilers got their first shutout in franchise history in a 21-0 victory over the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Special Teams

► Kelvin Beavon, Browns, returned a punt 42 yards to set up Jon Kitna's 4-yard touchdown pass to Chad Johnson with 44 seconds left in the Browns' 17-10 victory over the New York Giants.

SPORTS



Steelers lock up first-round bye, home-field advantage with victory over Ravens, Page 29

Manning eclipses Marino

Colts QB's 49th TD pass of season breaks record that stood since '84

BY MICHAEL MAROT
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Peyton Manning was too busy trying to beat the San Diego Chargers to celebrate his record-breaking touchdown pass.

The Indianapolis star broke Dan Marino's season record with 56 seconds left in regulation, hitting Brandon Stokley on a 21-yard pass pattern, but still had a lot of work to do in the Colts' 34-31 overtime victory Sunday.

Edgerrin James ran for the tying 2-point conversion on a play Manning called at the line, and the Colts won on Mike Vanderjagt's 30-yard field goal on the first possession of overtime.

It was only then that Manning, finally, let go by pumping his fist in the air, giving high-fives to teammates and hugging six-time Pro Bowl receiver Marvin Harrison.

"At the time I threw it, there wasn't a lot of emotion for me, because if we don't get the 2-point conversion, this is a down locker room right now," Manning said. "The fact that it happened, we won the game... it sure made for an exciting day."

For three weeks, Manning downplayed the significance of Marino's record, football's equivalent of baseball's home-run mark, saying all he wanted to do was win.

In the closing minutes Sunday, Manning delivered.

Indianapolis (12-3) scored on its final two possessions to win its eighth straight and wrap up the No. 3 seed in the AFC playoffs.

"The way it happened on that drive, I think Johnny Unitas would have been proud," Manning said.

The AFC West champion Chargers (11-4) tried to prevent the high-scoring Colts from torching their poor pass defense. They



Indianapolis Colts fans celebrate after quarterback Peyton Manning threw his 49th touchdown of the season, breaking the record held by Dan Marino, in the fourth quarter against the San Diego Chargers in Indianapolis on Sunday.

blitzed, used extra defensive backs and changed their looks to confuse Manning.

It worked effectively for three quarters.

Manning, who had been sacked just nine times in the first 14 games, went down four times against the Chargers. He fumbled twice, threw an interception and appeared to be pressing as he overthrew receivers, mistimed throws and ran out of trouble.

Then he reverted to his usual form, finishing 27-for-44 for 383 yards and the TDs. He has 49 touchdown passes this season, one more than Marino had in 1984, and remained on pace to shatter Steve Young's NFL record for passer rating next week in Denver. Manning is at 121.4, Young finished at 112.8 in 1994.

SEE MANNING ON PAGE 31



Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning led his team to a 34-31 overtime victory over the San Diego Chargers and broke a record that many thought could not be broken. He's still on pace to shatter Steve Young's NFL record for season passer rating (112.8) next week in Denver.

White's legacy as one of NFL's greatest DEs, pass rushers sure to earn him posthumous trip to NFL Hall

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Patriots rebound from last week's upset at Miami, secure first-round playoff bye with victory over Jets

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Nash sets assist record in Suns' victory over Raptors Page 26